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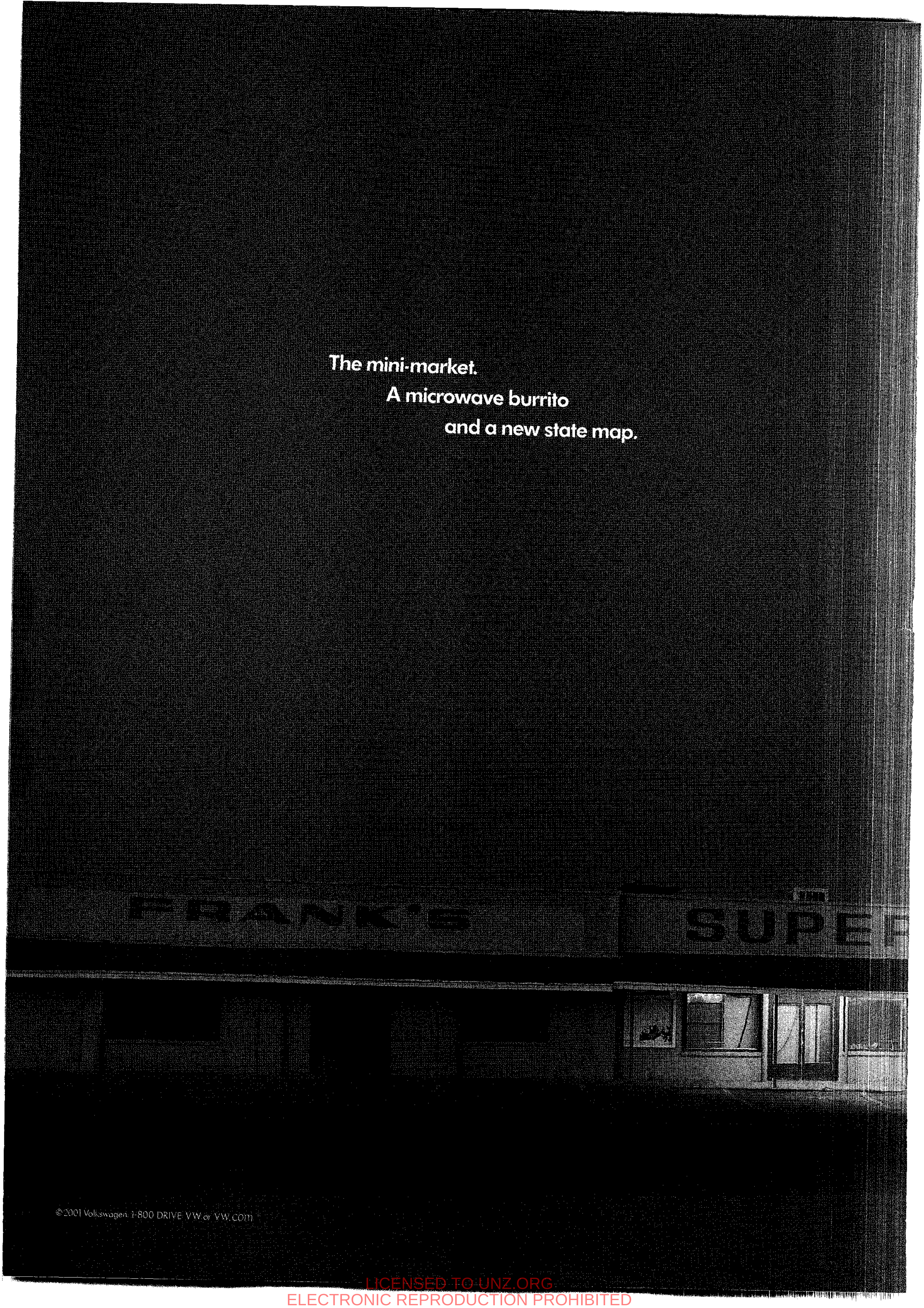
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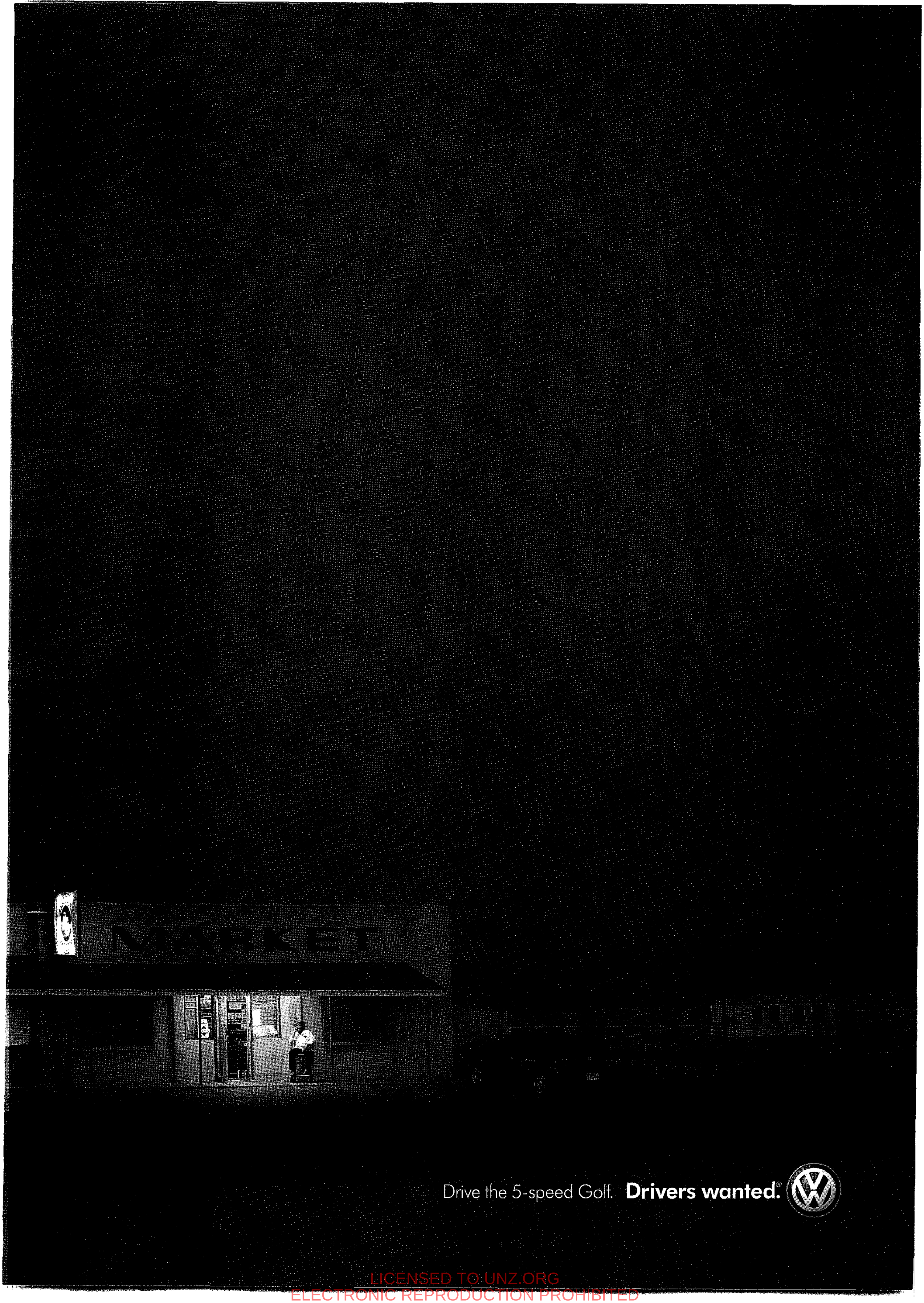
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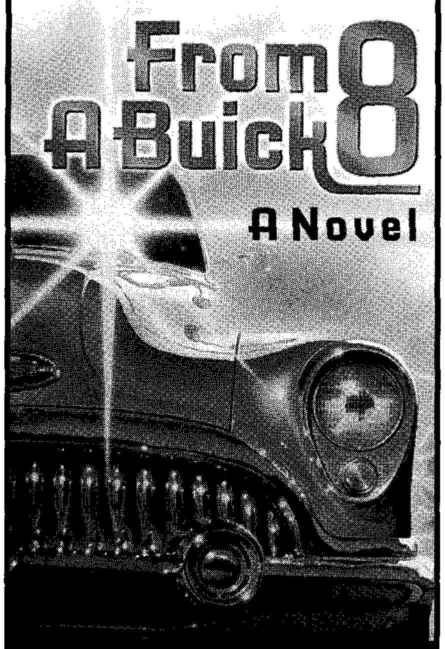

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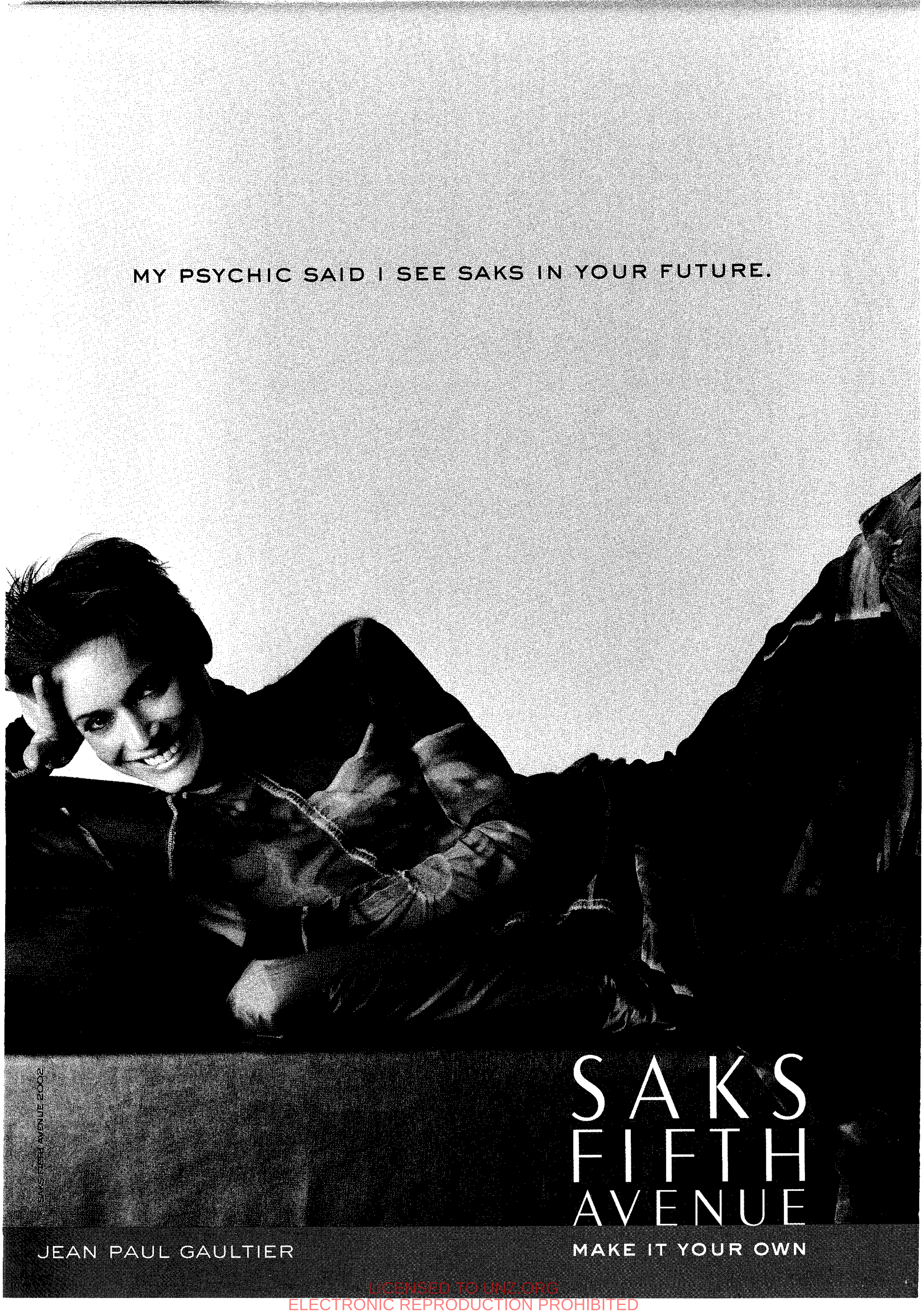
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MAKE IT YOUR OWN

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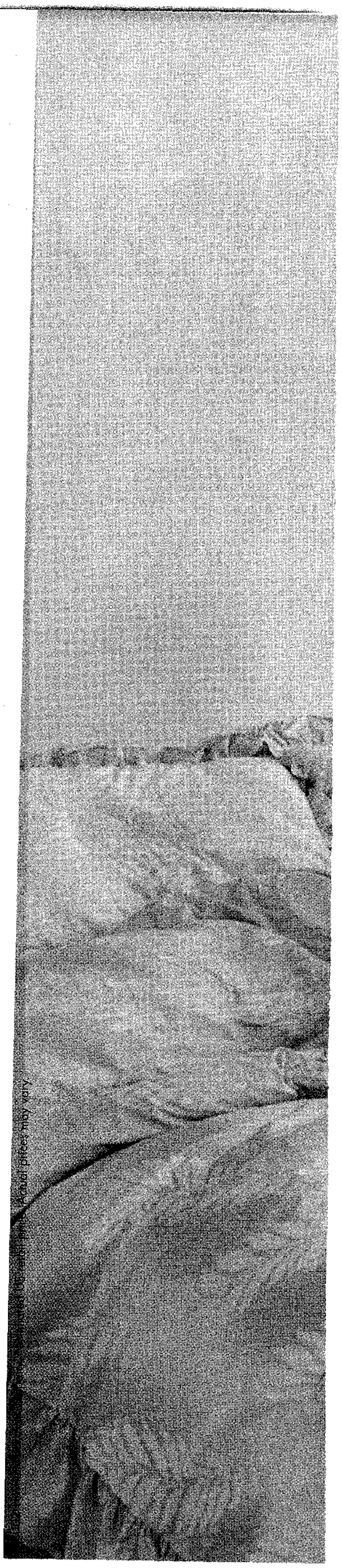
Yesterday, I printed out my holiday cards and they had chocolate stains all over them.

Okay, some of them were mine.



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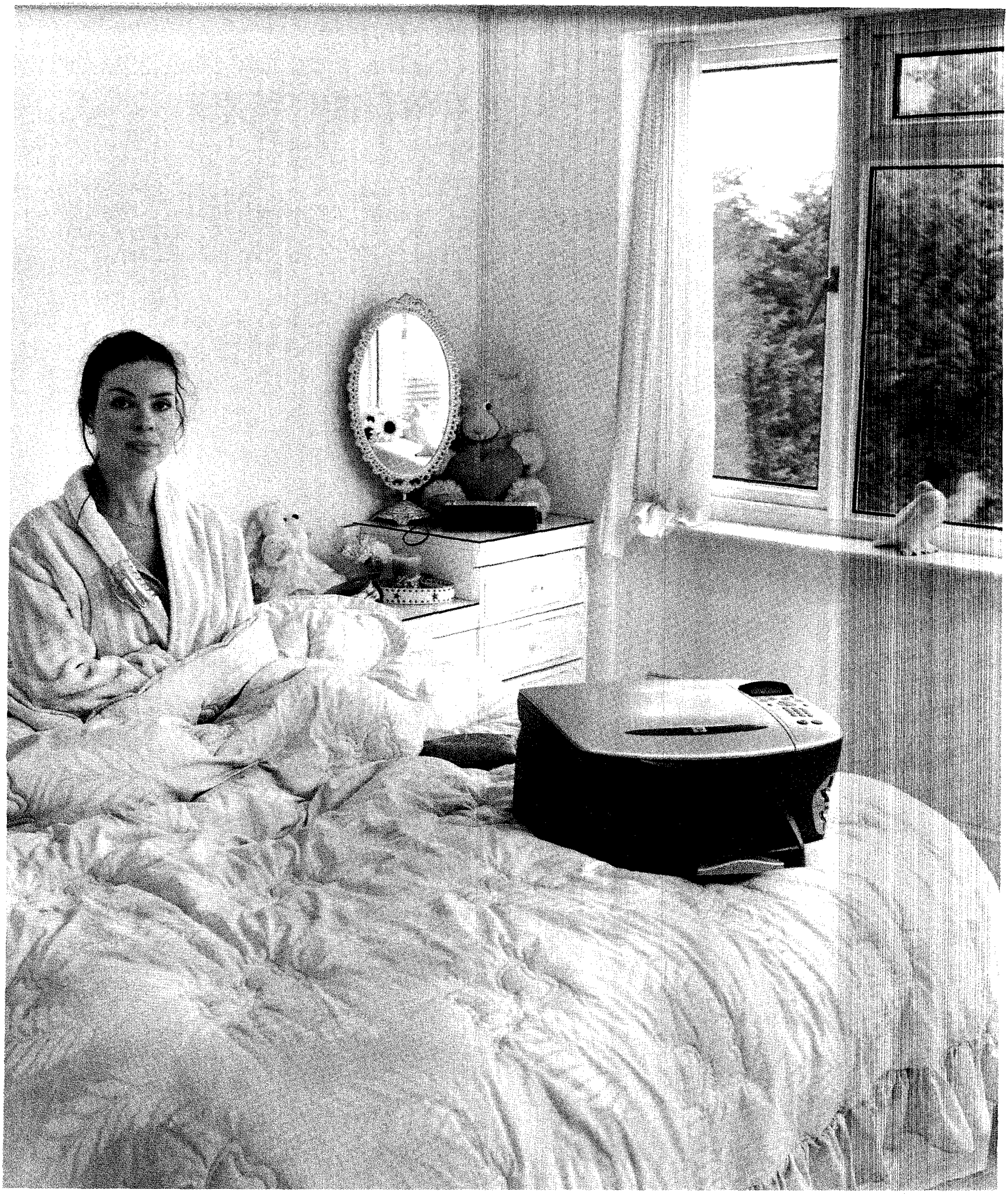

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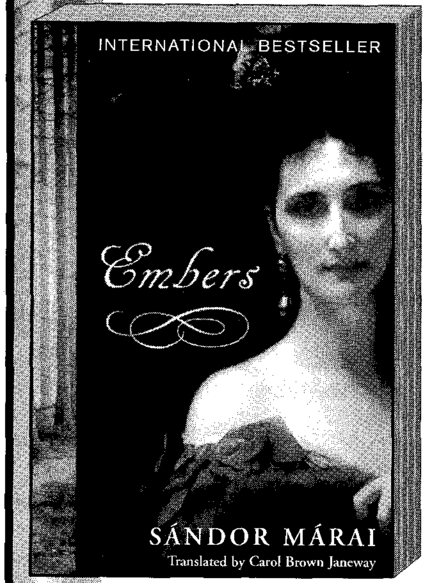

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CONTRIBUTORS

Seymour M. Hersh ("The Twentieth Man," p. 56) is a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter. He has written seven books, including "The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House."

Larissa MacFarquhar ("The Prophet of Decline," p. 86) has been a staff writer since 1998.

Noah Baumbach (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 78) wrote and directed the films "Kicking and Screaming" and "Mr. Jealousy."

Jessica Shattuck (Fiction, p. 112) is publishing her first novel, "The Hazards of Good Breeding," in February.

H. Allen Orr (A Critic at Large, p. 132), a professor of biology at the University of Rochester, is working on a book about the origin of species.

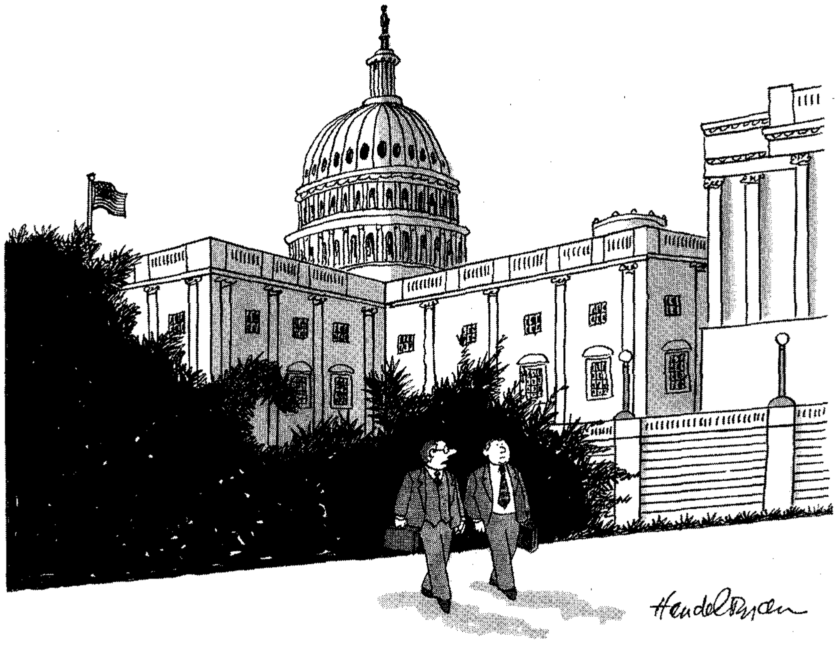
Jonathan Franzen ("Mr. Difficult," p. 100) is the author of "How to Be Alone," a new collection of essays. His novel "The Corrections" is out in paperback.

Josephine Jacobsen (Poem, p. 137) has published nine collections of poems, as well as books of fiction and criticism.

Louis Menand (Books, p. 126) is a staff writer and the author of "The Metaphysical Club," which won this year's Pulitzer Prize for History.

John Updike (Books, p. 140) has been a regular contributor since 1954. His new novel, "Seek My Face," will be published in the fall.

Bob Zoell (Cover), who is also known as Ha, lives in Los Angeles. This is his seventh cover for the magazine. ♦



"I do want a war, but I'd like to be asked nicely."

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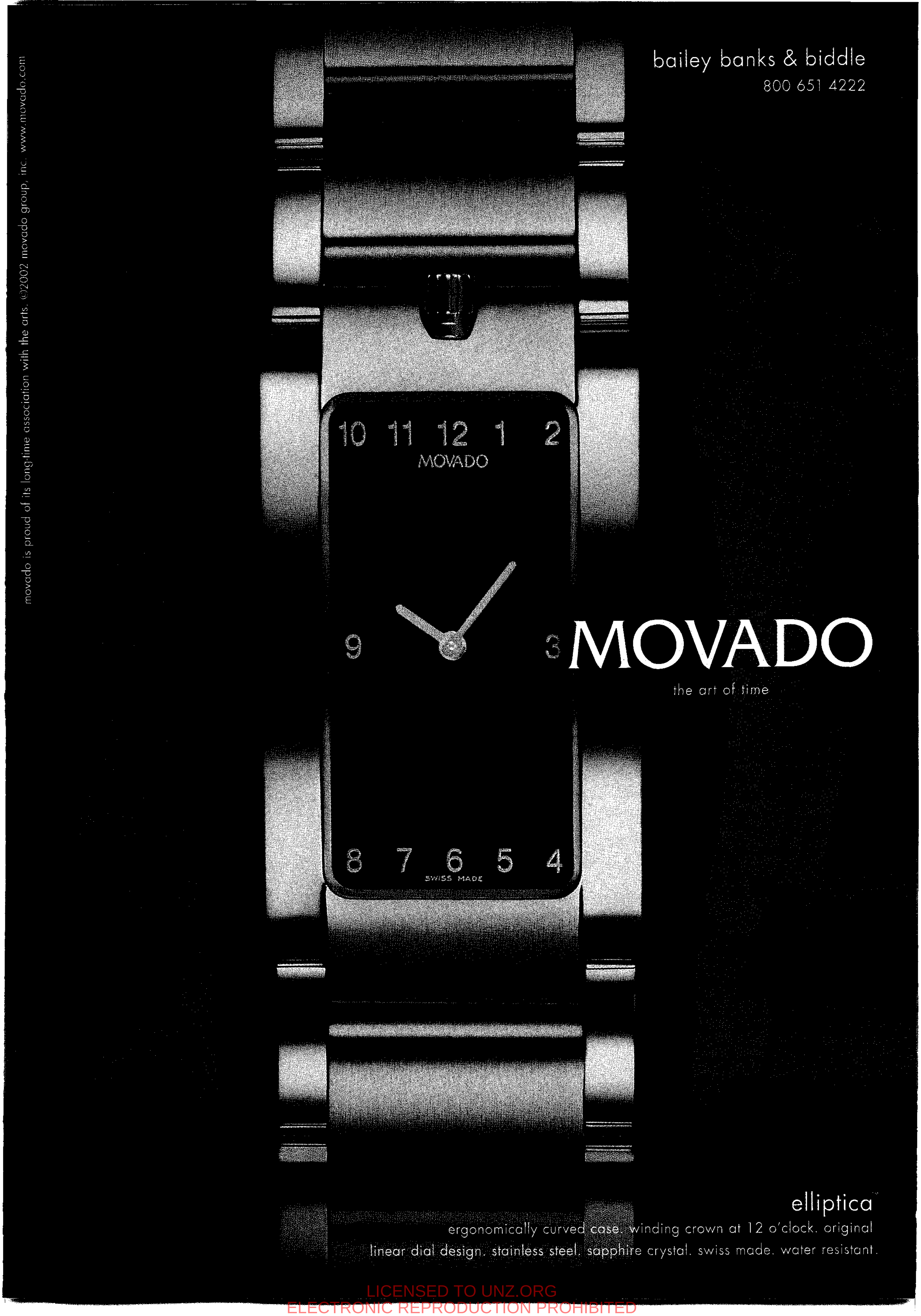
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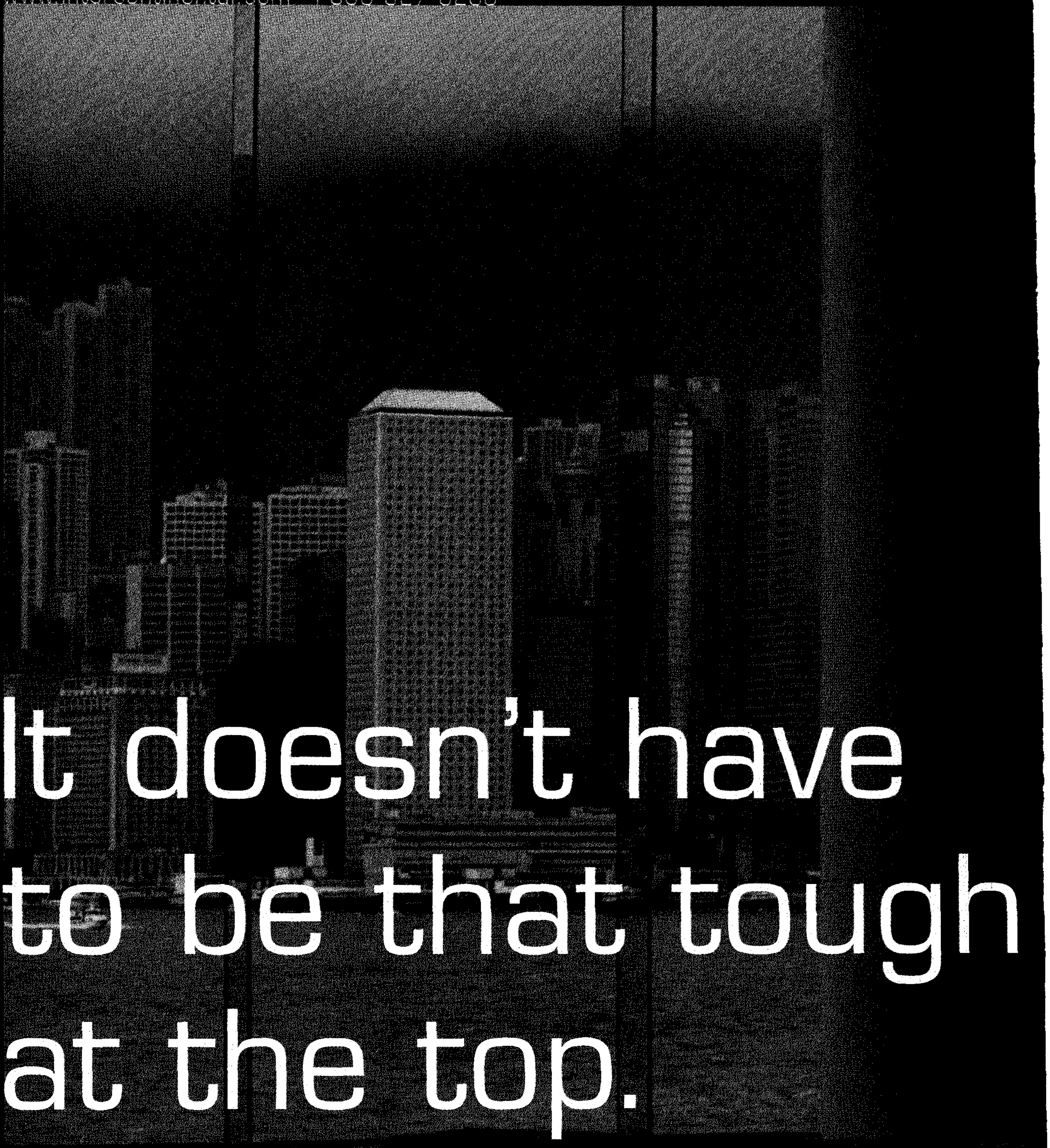
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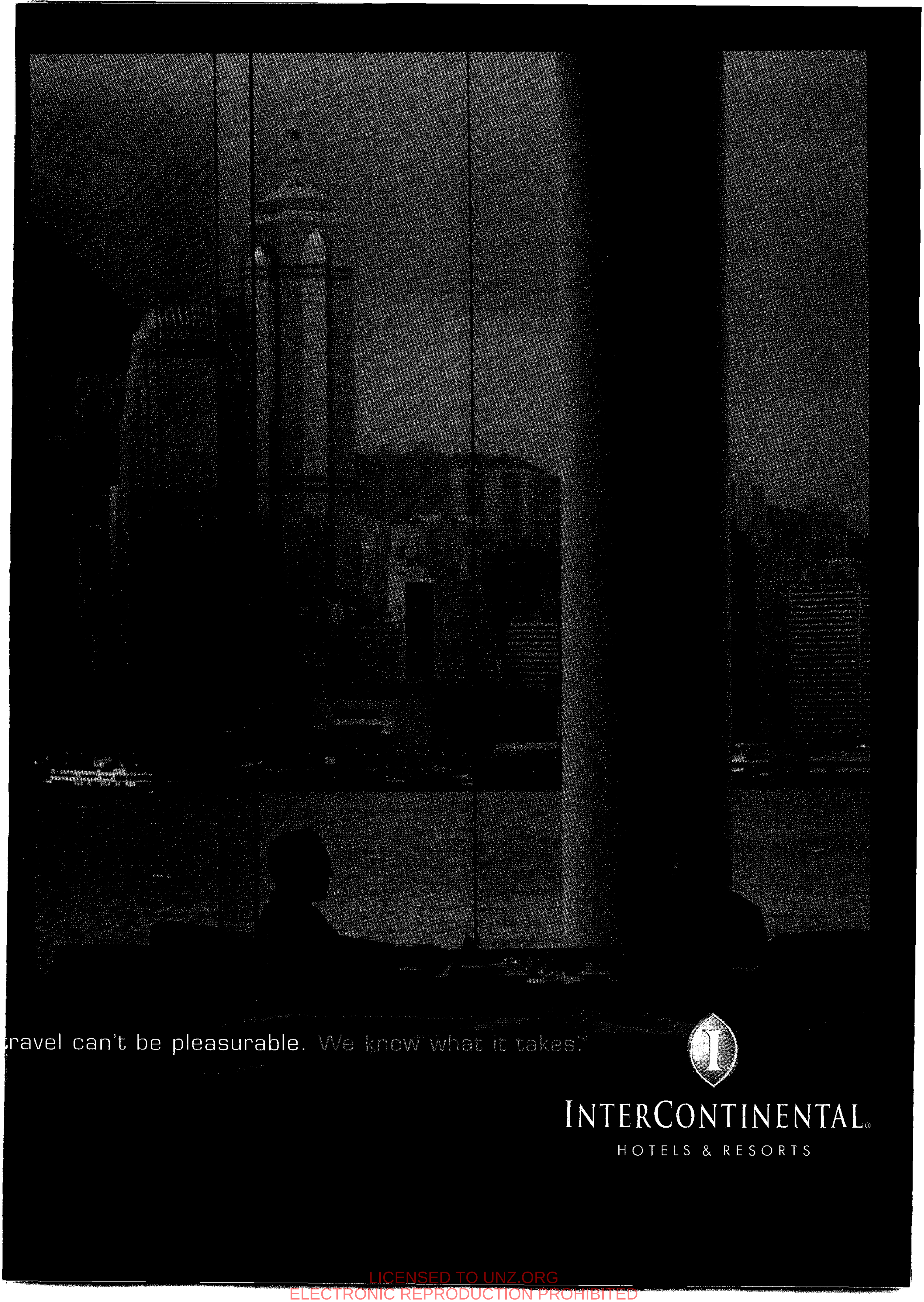
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IN PRAISE OF LAWSUITS

Jeffrey Toobin describes the passage of the 1995 Private Securities Litigation Reform Act as an act of revenge against Bill Lerach, the leading lawyer for plaintiffs in shareholders' lawsuits ("The Man Chasing Enron," September 9th). The legislation was much more—and more harmful—than that: its purpose was to erode the class action as a remedy for fraudulent conduct on the part of management. Toobin quotes Harvey Pitt, the present chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, as dismissing the class action as unnecessary and saying that "the marketplace usually determines what rational people do." Pitt's is a lonely voice. Almost forty years ago, the Supreme Court concluded, in J. I. Case Company v. Borak—a case that I argued—that private suits are "a necessary supplement to Commission action." Several former chairmen of the S.E.C. have also hailed the private action as vital to maintaining investor confidence. In 1989, David Ruder, a chairman under Presidents Reagan and George H. W. Bush, made the point that less than ten per cent of cases involving securities or commodities are brought by the government. As Toobin notes, in addition to greatly limiting discovery the act added requirements that placed difficult obstacles in the way of private actions. Lobbying by corporate executives, their lawyers, and accounting firms assured the passage of the act, which served as a prelude to Enron, WorldCom, and the other scandals of the past year.

Alex Elson
Chicago, Ill.

MURDER IN THE HAGUE

Elizabeth Kolbert, in her report on the murder of Pim Fortuyn, an openly gay, anti-immigration Dutch politician, writes that the last significant assassination in the Netherlands was in 1584, when William the Silent was shot ("Beyond Tolerance," September 9th). Almost a century afterward, however, in August, 1672, Johan de Witt was murdered in The Hague. De Witt, the Grand Pensionary of Holland and an opponent of the House of Orange, was the leading figure in the United Provinces for twenty years, until war broke out with France and England. His shooting, hanging, and dismemberment at the hands of a mob was as important as the actions of the lone gunmen who killed William the Silent and Fortuyn, and it assured the ascendancy of William III. New York perhaps has special reasons to forget that time, as the city switched sides more than once during the Anglo-Dutch wars; when the English fleet sailed into New York Harbor, Peter Stuyvesant, the governor, surrendered without a fight. But, for the Dutch, 1672 is unforgettable. That is the year they really did open the dikes and flood Amsterdam to defeat an invading army.

Geren Nichols
Fresno, Calif.

THE WAR ON SMOKING

The gradual criminalization of smoking, foreshadowed in Hendrik Hertzberg's Comment on New York's strict new anti-smoking laws, will fail just as surely as Prohibition and our nation's anti-drug policies have (The Talk of the Town, September 9th). Raising the price of cigarettes has already created a black market, which will almost certainly lead to yet more government spending on law enforcement. What's the next step? Using the D.E.A. to enforce anti-smoking laws when it's not busting small-time dope dealers? If Mayor Bloomberg is sincerely interested in preserving public health, let him focus on, say, cutting down on car exhaust. That he has chosen to make smoking his priority smacks of ordinary (and rather dreary) political posturing.

Dina Bisagna
New York City

•

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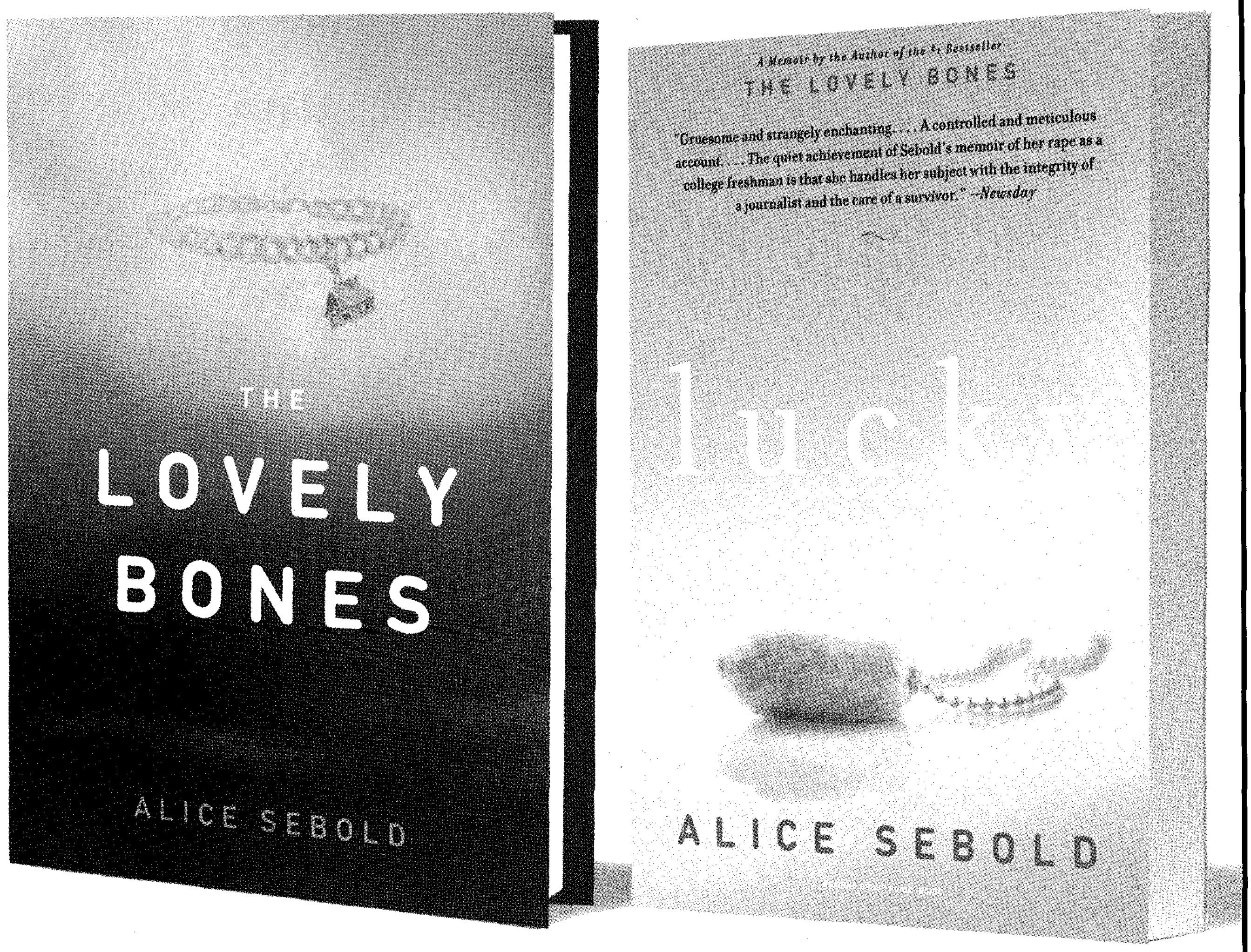

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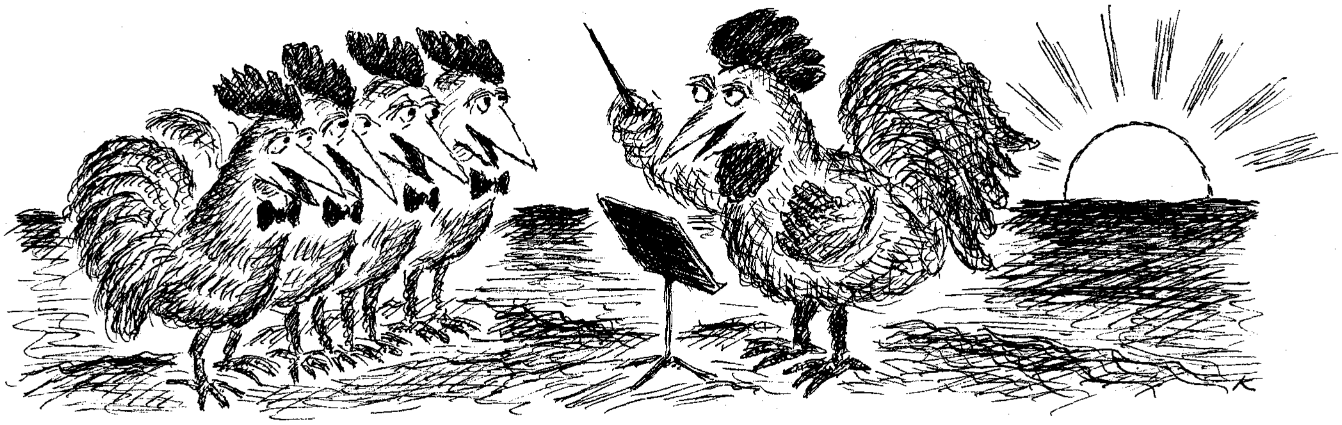

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

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29	30	1				

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AMOUR
James Lapine directs Malcolm Gets and Melissa Errico in a new musical by Michel Legrand (score) and Didier van Cauwelaert (book and lyrics), based on the short story "Le Passe-Muraille," by Marcel Aymé. In previews. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

BAILEGANGAIRE
The Irish Repertory Theatre's staging of Tom Murphy's play stars Pauline Flanagan as a senile woman who never reaches the end of her nightly retelling of a yarn about a local laughing contest. Previews begin Oct. 1. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

BETTY RULES
An autobiographical pop-rock musical chronicling the ups and downs in the career of the girl band Betty (Alyson Palmer, Amy Ziff, and Elizabeth Ziff). Michael Greif ("Rent") is the director. In previews. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 239-6200.)

BURNING BLUE
A fatal accident involving three F-18 jets is at the center of this drama by D. M. W. Greer. Chad Lowe leads the cast. Previews begin Oct. 1. (Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

THE BUTTER AND EGG MAN
George S. Kaufman's 1925 comedy about a Midwesterner who moves to New York to have a go at the theatre business, in an Atlantic Theatre Company revival. John Ellison Conlee, Julie Halston, Tom Mardirosian, and Michael McGrath are in the cast. In previews. (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

THE CHARITY THAT BEGAN AT HOME
The Mint Theatre's staging of St. John Hankin's 1906 comedy about a family of unremitting do-gooders. Previews begin Sept. 27. (311 W. 43rd St. 315-0231.)

EVOLUTION
A morality play by Jonathan Marc Sherman, about an academic studying Charles Darwin who is offered a job in the entertainment industry. Josh Hamilton, Keira Naughton, Peter Dinklage, and Ione Skye are in the cast. Previews begin Sept. 27. (45 Bleecker Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 260-3750.)

THE EXONERATED
Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen interviewed forty former death-row prisoners for their play about six people imprisoned for crimes they did not commit. Sara Gilbert and Richard Dreyfuss are in the cast. Previews begin Oct. 1. (45 Bleecker Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

FLOWER DRUM SONG
A revival of the 1958 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, starring Lea Salonga and directed by Robert Longbottom, with a new book by David Henry Hwang. In previews. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

HAPPY DAYS
Joseph Chaikin directs Beckett's play at the theatre in which it premièred, in New York in 1961. With Joyce Aaron as Winnie and Ron Faber as Willie. In previews through Sept. 28. Opens Sept. 29 at 7. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

JOLSON AND COMPANY
A musical about the life of the early show-biz superstar, written by Stephen Mo Hanan (who portrays Jolson) and Jay Berkow. In previews. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

LITTLE HAM
An encore staging of a musical based on the Langston Hughes play of the same name, which was staged last fall by the Amas Musical Theatre. It has music by Judd Woldin, lyrics by Richard Engquist and Mr. Woldin, and a book by Dan Owens. In previews. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

A MAN OF NO IMPORTANCE
Roger Rees and Faith Prince star in a musical by Terrence McNally (book), Stephen Flaherty (music), and Lynn Ahrens (lyrics), based on the 1994 movie, set in Dublin in the sixties, about a middle-aged, closeted bus driver who gets into trouble when he proposes Wilde's "Salomé" as his church troupe's next theatrical production. Joe Mantello is the director. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

MEDEA
Dublin's Abbey Theatre returns to the Brooklyn Academy of Music with Deborah Warner's staging of the Euripides play, starring Fiona Shaw. Previews begin Oct. 1. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

MOVIN' OUT
Twyla Tharp's dance-musical, based on the songs of Billy Joel. Previews begin Sept. 30. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

MY OLD LADY
Israel Horovitz's latest play stars Peter Friedman as a man who inherits a Paris apartment, only to find that it is occupied by a ninety-year-old woman (Siân Phillips) and her daughter (Jan Maxwell). David Esbjornson is the director. In previews. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE
Frank Gorshin portrays George Burns, in a one-man show about the comic's life, written by Rupert Holmes. John Tillinger is the director. In previews. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE WORLD OVER
Playwrights Horizons kicks off the season with a new play by Keith Bunin, about a young man who believes he is the lost prince of a mythical kingdom. In previews through Sept. 29. Opens Oct. 1 at 7. (The Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

THE BOYS FROM SYRACUSE
This Roundabout Theatre revival of the 1938 Rodgers and Hart comedy based on Shakespeare's "Comedy of Errors" has a new book by Nicky Silver, based on George Abbot's original script—and something has been lost in translation. Rather than perked up, the show feels freighted by the update. Scott Ellis's direction and Martin Pakledinaz's costumes have Looney Tunes written all over them. The resulting hybrid of humor brings to mind the broad, silly, knowing farce that Carol Burnett's company patented in the seventies, which hasn't aged well, either. Rodgers and Hart's songs are timeless, and the game cast renders them well, but that's still not a good enough reason to sit through everything else. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

BURN THIS
Catherine Keener and Edward Norton lead the cast in a Signature Theatre Company revival of Lanford Wilson's 1987 drama. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

CALL THE CHILDREN HOME
A musical set in a brothel in New Orleans at the beginning of the twentieth century, written by the late Thomas Babe (book) and Mildred Kayden (music and lyrics). (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS
In the Aquila Theatre Company's excellent production of Shakespeare's intricately foolish story, the laughs are many and the delights deep. The seven cast members, led here by Mark Saturno and Louis Butelli as the two sets of twins, mix remarkable range with insane energy. (Harold Clurman, 412 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

CONNECTIONS
A newly divorced man experiments with Internet dating, in a romantic comedy by Vernon Church. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., near 10th St. 206-1515.)

I remember it clearly.

We were standing by the canal that ran past our families' houses. When we were children we had shared that water. I would throw a stick into the canal that Anton would fish out when it floated by his house. He would use the stick to poke down into the mirrored sky and break up the reflection.

Will you do it? he said. *Will you marry me and find a new canal to live by? The next canal over is rather nice.*

I had never liked the way he used *rather* to dilute what he said.

A bottle was bobbing up and down in the water. In my head I scolded the person who had thrown it in. Brewers made beer from this water. We drank that beer. It was our duty to keep the canals clean.

I wanted to reach down for the bottle but a barge was approaching, loaded with vegetables — cabbages and carrots and potatoes. The barge man leered at me, even with Anton standing at my side. I turned red and tugged the corners of my cap to hide my face.

When the barge had passed I looked again for the bottle. It had disappeared under the churning water.

Anton caught my hands. His own were dry as leaves. *Will you marry me, Anneka? Will you?*

That was another thing I didn't like about him — he repeated words as if I were deaf.

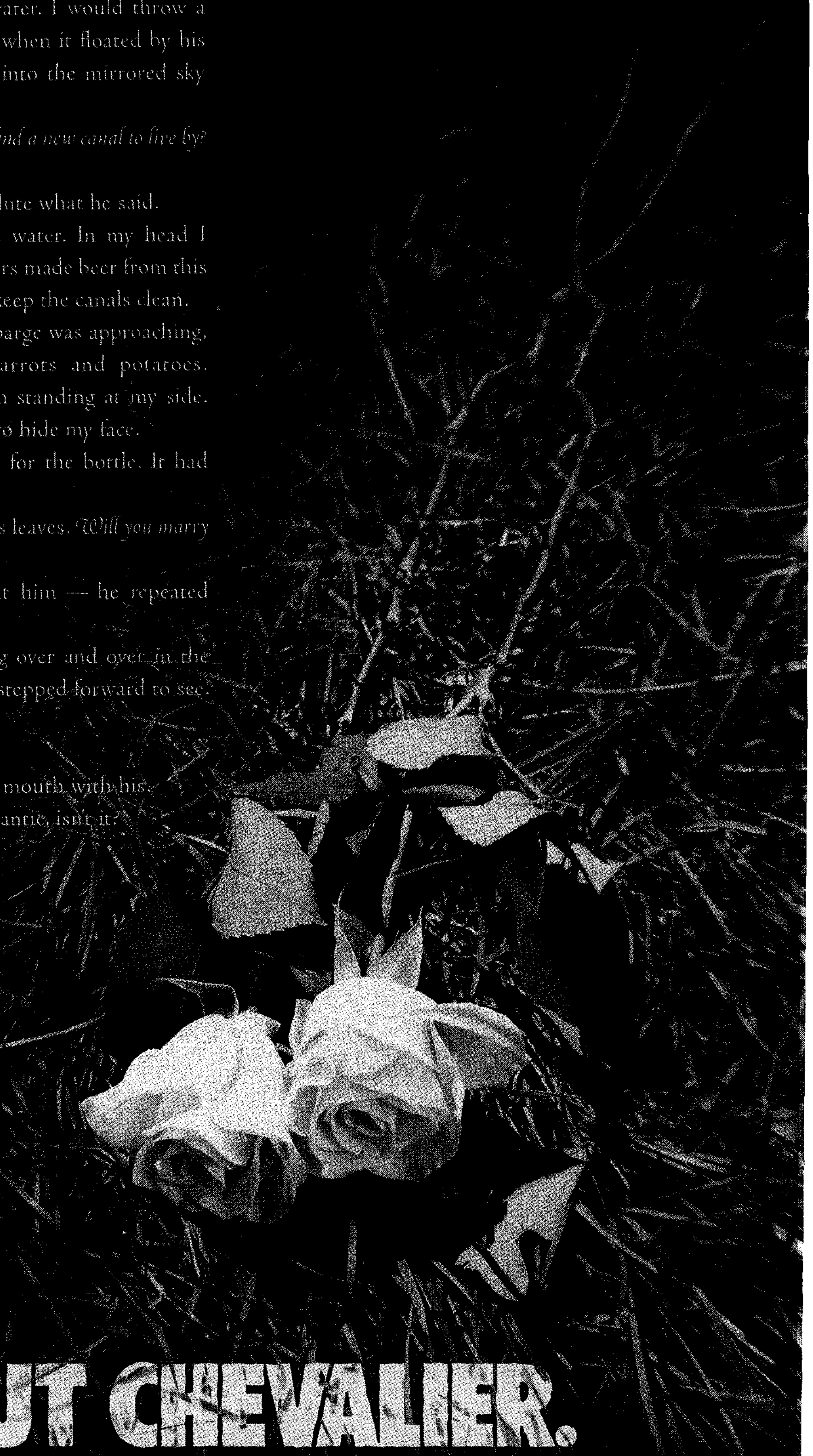
The bottle popped up to the surface, rolling over and over in the wake of the barge. Letters were etched on it. I stepped forward to see.

Will you?

Absolu— I read aloud.

Before I could finish Anton had covered my mouth with his.

And that is how I married your father. Romantic, isn't it?



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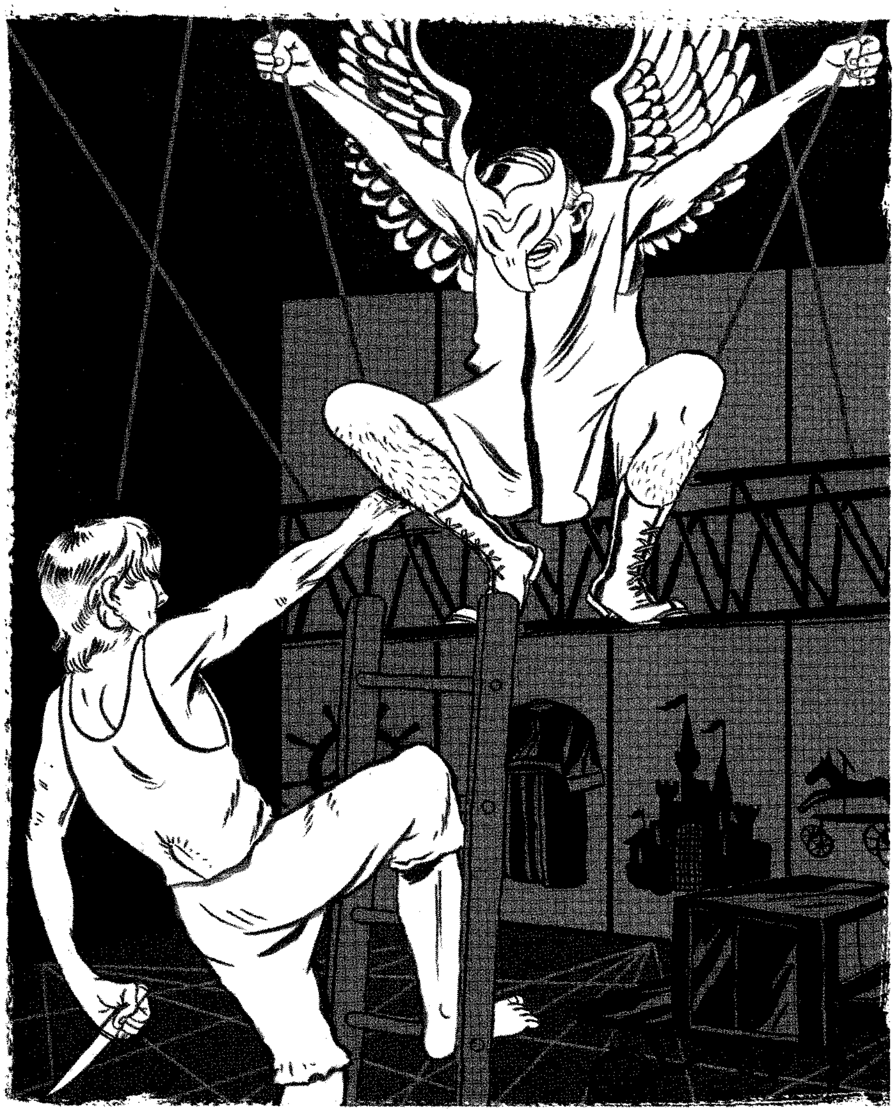

Keith Bunin's "The World Over," staged by Playwrights Horizons.

ZOHAR LAZAR

THE DARK KALAMAZOO
The Drama Dept. opens the season with an autobiographical one-woman show by Oni Faida Lampley, about making her first trip to Africa at nineteen. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 633-9632.)

ENDPAPERS
The first full-length play by Thomas McCormack, the retired C.E.O. of an independently owned publishing house (St. Martin's), about choosing a successor as C.E.O. of an independently owned publishing house, is highly literate (imagine: grammar jokes!) and full of zingy one-liners. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE
The brilliant Edie Falco's star turn in Terence McNally's sentimental two-character study about a man and a woman marginalized by life while struggling to embrace it is the best reason to see this derivative work, which owes a great deal to William Inge. She's an over-forty waitress who once dreamed of being an actress; Johnny (Stanley Tucci) is the hyperkinetic cook at the restaurant where Frankie works. He wants children, she's afraid of commitment. Unfortunately, McNally exploits Inge's weakest traits as a writer—corny exposition, faulty psychological reasoning—and turns the volume up high on them. The play is a surface crowd-pleaser, and Tucci's strident surface charm works perfectly with it, but Falco's steady reasonableness, even in Frankie's moments of panic, shows up both Tucci and the play. With this performance, she joins the ranks of Laurette Taylor and Shirley Booth: great American actresses who garner audience sympathy through lyrical naturalism. Joe Mantello is the director. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE GRADUATE
This pointless production is endless and full of dead air. There are exactly two pleasures here: Victor Slezak, as Mr. Robinson, and Murphy Guyer, as Benjamin's father; they depict beautifully the anger and anxiety that underlie their postwar poolside bonhomie. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/15/02.) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

GRAHAM NORTON: RED-HANDED
The U.K. comic (and host of BBC America's "So Graham Norton") brings his brand of humor to Manhattan for a brief engagement. (St. Clement's, 23 W. 46th St. 866-486-7619. Closes Sept. 28.)

THE GUYS
A dialogue between a fire captain who lost eight of his men on September 11th and an editor who helps him prepare their eulogies, written by Anne Nelson, a journalist, and directed by Jim Simpson, the Flea Theatre's artistic director. It's an artful and moving re-creation of the relationships New Yorkers formed as a result of that day—of the way that people "jumped tracks" and suddenly saw into each other's lives—and an admirable tribute to the men who died. (The Flea, 41 White St. 206-1515.)

HAIRSPRAY
This musical-comedy version of the 1988 John Waters movie, with a book by Mark O'Donnell and Thomas Meehan, a score by Marc Shaiman, and lyrics by Shaiman and Scott Wittman, takes off from the opening number and never loses its momentum. In Baltimore in 1962, the rotund teen Tracy Turnblad (Marissa Jaret Winokur) wants to dance, make out with the best-looking boy in town, and integrate "The Corny Collins Show," a local teen-dance TV program. David Rockwell's sets and William Ivey Long's costumes combine and highlight the period artifacts in an ecstasy of gorgeous bad taste, offered with just enough invention to achieve lyrical wit. What the show is parodying was trivial to begin with, so the parodies don't sting—they're not meant to. Instead they break free into some goofy new realm of pop Dada. With the great Harvey Fierstein, plucked, shaved, and padded, as Tracy's mother, Edna Turnblad, a housewife who takes in laundry but who gets to appear, at the climax of the show, in flaming pink. Jack O'Brien is the director. (9/2/02) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

HARLEM SONG
Essentially a revue, using both old and new compositions, selected or written by the director George C. Wolfe and the show's talented music supervisors, Zane Mark and Daryl Waters. It has no dialogue to speak of—or, at least, no dialogue that contributes significantly to the plot or helps to convey the time line framing the show's eleven sections, each of which marks a particular moment in the neighborhood's social history. Like Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" and the novels of Terry McMillan, it is a form of art whose aesthetic concerns are secondary to its desire to make "the people" feel good, about themselves and their community. The Harlem of "Harlem Song" is not an urban wasteland in the process of reinventing itself. It is a realm of legend and lore, and a mythical homeland, which it is our duty as theatregoers, as citizens, to celebrate. This is a point worth making, but not one that bears much repeating. (8/19 & 26/02) (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 307-7171.)

INTO THE WOODS
Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's 1987 fairy-tale-derived musical isn't so much a rethinking of fairy tales as it is a parable about growing up and finding your place in the community, and about learning to live with uncertainty and ambivalence. The archetypal material is treated with suitable directness and simplicity, and yet the show lacks none of the intelligence or emotional honesty we expect from Sondheim. Mr. Lapine is the director. (5/13/02) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

JOE
In Richard Maxwell's latest play, which he wrote and directed, five actors portray the title character—an ordinary guy who loves the Jets, pines for his teen-age crush, and spends his life trying to figure out what to do with it—at different ages and different stages of existential crises. Dressed in red hooded sweatshirts and jeans, they deliver long monologues in the playwright's trademark flat tones and sing his quasi-pop songs without quite following the three-piece band accompanying them. The opening scenes, in which the young Joe (Richard Zhuravenko) and then the teen-age Joe (Matthew Stadelmann) struggle with adolescence and the sudden death of Joe's mother, are especially affecting. The adult Joes, however, are less interesting ("So I'm lost, so what?" one says), so the character as a whole is less emotionally engaging than he should be. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes Sept. 29.)

JULIUS CAESAR
The experimental Access Theatre Company's staging of Shakespeare's play, adapted and directed by Randy Sharp. (One Sheridan Sq. 807-9300.)

THE MAYOR'S LIMO
A comedy by Mark Nassar ("Tony n' Tina's Wedding"), about a homeless man who becomes the center of a political war after he unwittingly urinates on the mayor's car during a demonstration. (Kraine, 85 E. 4th St. 352-3101.)

OKLAHOMA!
There are stupendous pleasures in the Royal National Theatre's version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1943 American classic. Many of them are due to the high-spirited, humorous choreography of Susan Stroman, and to Anthony Ward's picturesque set. But technique, which can make a show work, is not enough to make it wonderful. (4/1/02) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

PETER AND VANDY
A cinéma-vérité take on the relationship of two young lovers written by Jay DiPietro, who also stars and directs. (Paradise, 64 E. 4th St. 206-1515.)

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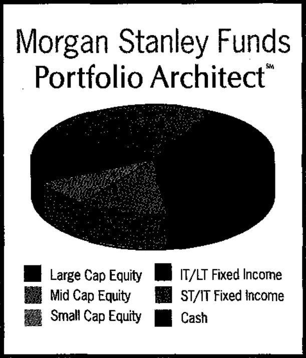

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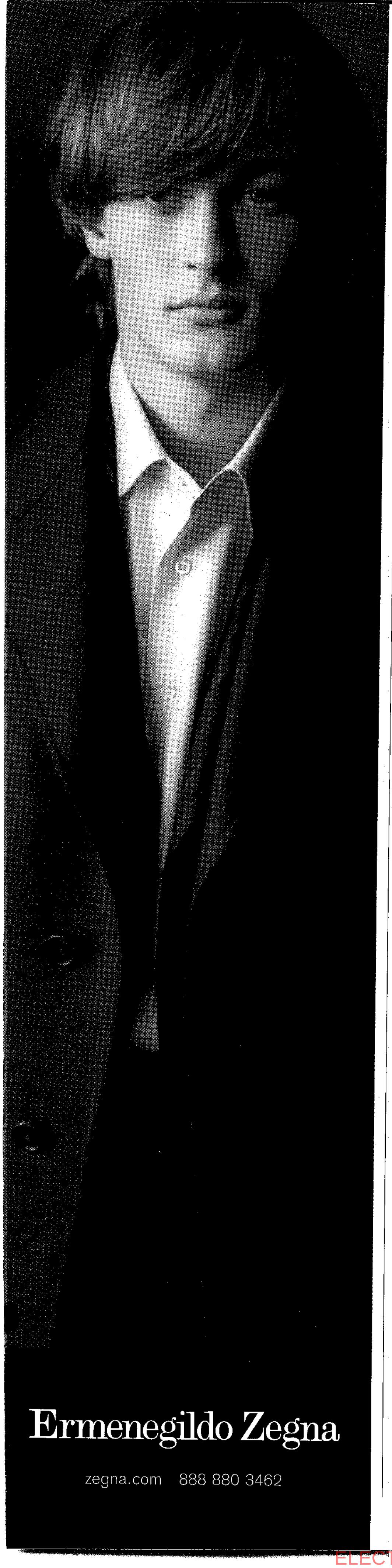

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THE PARADISE PROJECT
The performance artist John Kelly's meditation on the 1945 French film "Children of Paradise," with music by Michael Torke and Mark Campbell. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Closes Sept. 28.)

THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER
Mark Twain's novel has been adapted for the stage and musicalized by Neil Berg (score and lyrics) and Bernie Garza and Ray Roderick (book). (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

RICKY JAY: ON THE STEM
The master magician's tribute to the flimflammery and weird entertainments that have cropped up over the years along the length of Broadway, "the stem that winds the watch" of New York City. Prepare to be happily hornswoggled. Directed by David Mamet. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

ROMAN NIGHTS
The long friendship between Tennessee Williams and Anna Magnani is the subject of a new play by Franco D'Alessandro. (DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER
A Pearl Theatre Company production of Oliver Goldsmith's 1773 comedy. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

SPLIT
Michael Weller's comic drama about the breakup of a "perfect" couple. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

TAKE ME OUT
From London's Donmar Warehouse, a new play by Richard Greenberg, in which a heroic baseball player comes out to the press. Joe Mantello is the director. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Just like the 1967 movie it's based on, this musical is supposed to be all madcap Jazz Age fizziness, but the harder the cast sings and dances, the flatter the enterprise falls. The colors seem garish rather than gay, the manic energy feels forced at gunpoint, and the only thing you recall about Sutton Foster's Millie after you leave the theatre is her huge white teeth and bouncy black bob. Call it thoroughly boring, shrilly. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

THREE-CORNERED MOON
The Keen Company's latest excavation is Gertrude Tonkonogy's 1933 comedy hit, about a charmingly madcap Brooklyn family that loses all its money in the stock-market crash. The show explores the question of which ideals one can give up in hard times and which ones are worth holding on to at all costs, but the fast-paced script ensures that it never becomes too earnest. Under Carl Forsman's clever direction, the high-energy cast perfectly embody the fun. Nick Toren, as a snobbish brother who buckles down, is particularly interesting to watch as he reacts to the rest of the family; Andrew McGinn, as a local doctor, convincingly portrays a mixture of concern and delight at the family's behavior. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 560-7284. Closes Sept. 29.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

THE GOAT; OR, WHO IS SYLVIA
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

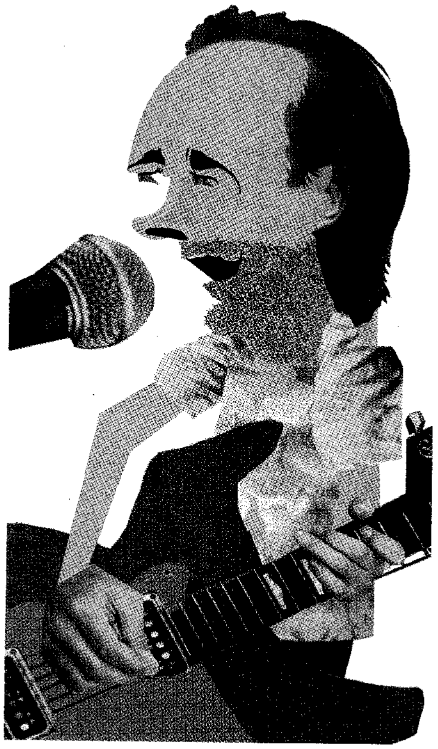
THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LOVE, JANIS
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.

LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.

METAMORPHOSES
Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.



Gordon Gano, at the Bowery Ballroom.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.

PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL
Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.

URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

MOMIX
The company opens the Joyce's fall season with two full-length programs presented during a three-week run. This week, they perform "Opus Cactus," their celebration of the Sonoran Desert. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Sept. 24 at 7:30, Sept. 25-27 at 8, Sept. 28 at 2 and 8, and Sept. 29 at 2 and 7:30. Through Oct. 13.)

STEPHEN KRONINGER

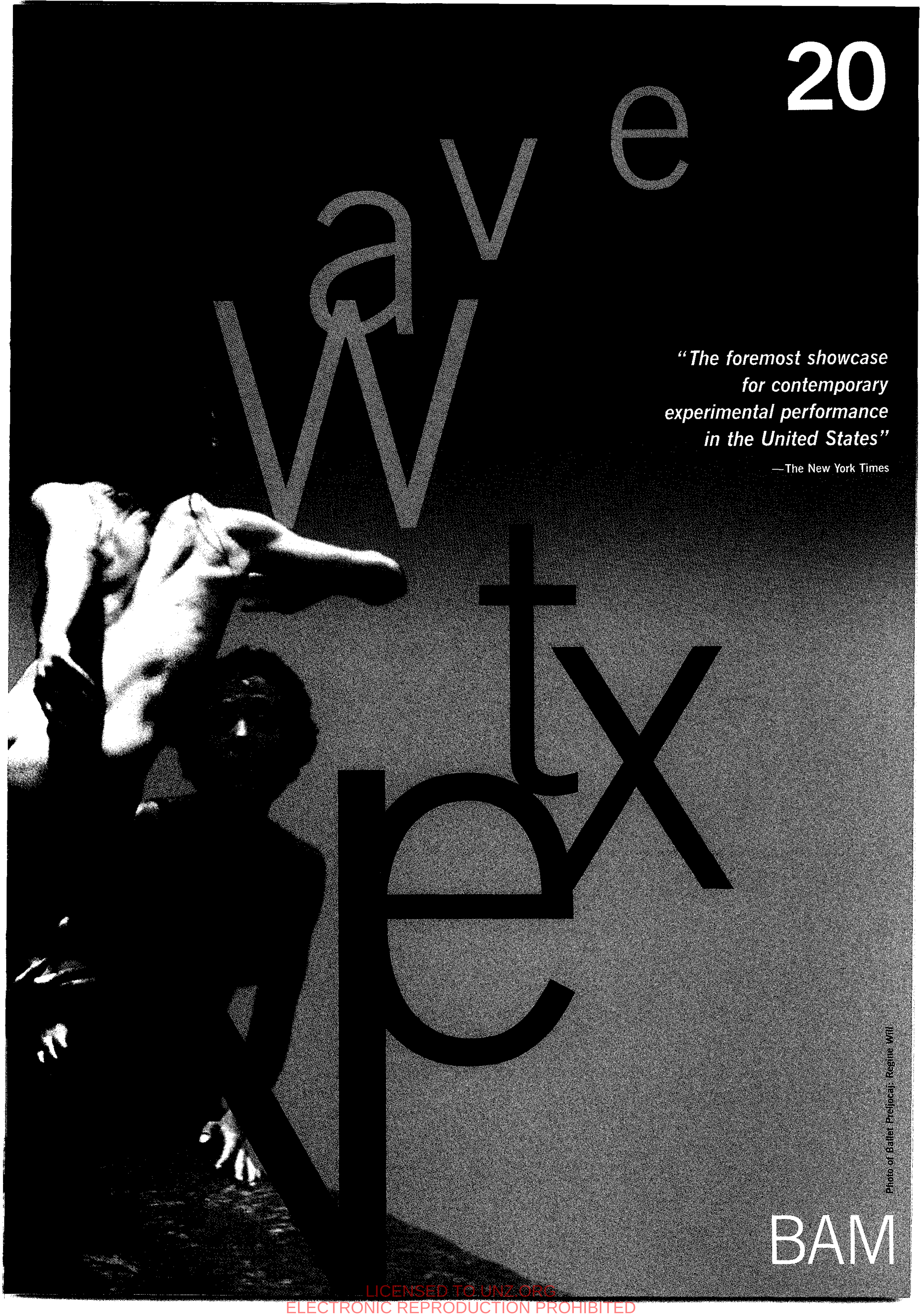


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Photo of Ballet Preljocaj: Regine Will

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Oct 16—19

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Preljocaj's defiantly modern and versatile troupe performs a fiercely energized double-bill.

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Oct 22—26

Grupo Corpo

Brazil's beloved contemporary dance company dazzles with its amalgam of modern, ballet, African, and samba forms.

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Kathleen Brennan

Robert Wilson

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Golijov's Latin American-infused *Pasión* "has a revolutionary air, as if musical history were starting over." —The New Yorker

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Hibiki (Resonance from Far Away)
Nov 19—24

Sankai Juku

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mercy
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Mark Morris Dance Group

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Next Wave Gala, Dec 17

BAM expands this year's festival with additional programs delving into the past and looking to the future of the Next Wave Festival. Highlights include partnerships with the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Thirteen/WNET, WNYC Radio, Public Art Fund, and the panel discussion BAMtalk: Art in the 80s.

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Woyzeck photo: The Ocular One

"THE JUNEBUG SYMPHONY"
The show's creator and principal performer, James Thiérrée, grew up in a tent, he says, after his parents ran away to the circus (they took him along). He began his circus duties when he was still a wee tot, as a prop in their hands. As if that weren't enough, Charlie Chaplin was his grandfather. "I should have been an accountant," he says. "Now, that would have been exotic." Instead, he did the normal thing and learned to fly on the trapeze, clown with delicate ease or sudden rambunctiousness, and play haunting violin while skimming the ground on roller skates—all of which comes into play in this feather-light symphony of things (and four people) going bump in the night. "The show is very simple," Thiérrée says. "It is made of imagination and good will." (New Victory Theatre, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Sept. 27 at 7, Sept. 28 at 1 and 7, and Sept. 29 at 3. Through Oct. 13.)

"RIP IT OPEN"
Maura Donohue thinks her last couple of productions, delicate Butoh-style works she often performed in the nude, were trying too hard to be good. "They had this one-world, uplift thing going on," she says. "I was performing what I wanted to feel, not what I did feel." So, taking courage from such liberating embarrassments as "Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!" and Courtney Love, she is offering an evening of suspect taste and clashing attitudes. "Rip It Open" skips and hops from, say, a riot schoolgrrrl bouncing up and down on a bungee cord while begging Jesus to sock it to her to a tough-minded feminist word-slammer suddenly overcome by Hallmark sweetness. Donohue says, "It was time to get over my approval issues." (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Sept. 26-29 at 8:30. Through Oct. 6.)

"IN THE COMPANY OF MEN"
There are many solos in the sixth annual concert of commissioned works by male choreographers: Robert Battle presents an homage to a Juilliard mentor, Ezra Caldwell shows an internal struggle, Sean Curran explores the meanings of an Irish saying in "It's Better to Be Looking at It Than to Be Looking for It," Shouze Ma dances with a red fan, and Charles Wright contrasts ambition and maturity. Edgar Zendejas offers the duet "Sonata de Luna," and Nathan Trice presents a work for six dancers between sixteen and eighteen years old. (Theatre of the Riverside Church, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. 870-6784. Sept. 26-28 at 8 and Sept. 29 at 3.)

RANDY JAMES DANCE WORKS
The New Jersey-based company presents repertory work and the première of "Among the Stars That Have a Different Birth." (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 924-0077. Sept. 27-28 at 8 and Sept. 29 at 3.)

MISNOMER DANCE THEATRE
The choreographer Chris Elam presents a series of collaborative performances inspired by Balinese dance but grounded in theatrical transformations: arms sprout from heads, a dancer metamorphoses into an ostrich, five dancers appear to share a single head. This week, Elam is joined by Thoth, Edisa Weeks, and Heidi Latsky. (Chashama, 135 W. 42nd St. 206-1515. Sept. 26 at 10:15 P.M. and Sept. 29 at 9.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

EITETSU HAYASHI
Japan's leading *taiko* drummer returns to New York for the first time in more than a decade. He is on tour celebrating his twenty-year solo career, in which he's worked with everyone from the jazz pianist Marcus Roberts to the Boston Symphony Orchestra. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Sept. 25-26 at 8.)

"GREAT NIGHT IN HARLEM"
George Benson, Clark Terry, Eddie Bert, Freddie Hubbard, Cecil Payne, Ron Carter, George Coleman, Hank Jones, and dozens of other jazz greats gather for a concert to benefit the Jazz Musicians Emergency Fund. Bill Cosby is the host. (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. For more information, call 245-3999. Sept. 26 at 7.)

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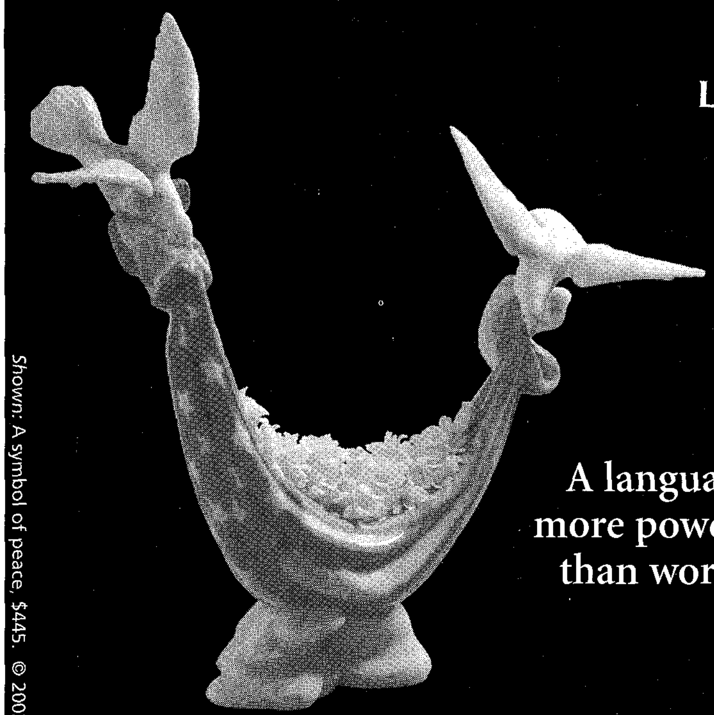

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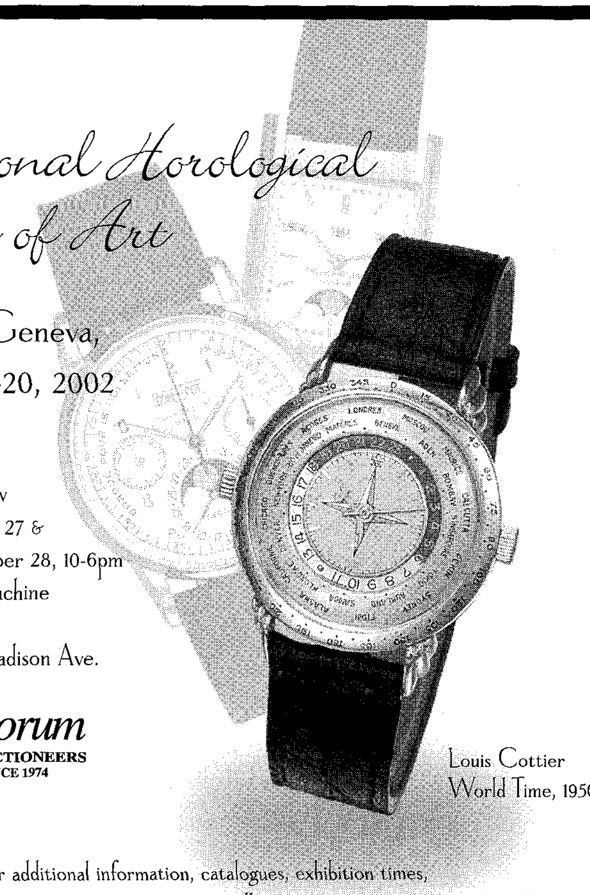

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NY GUITAR FESTIVAL
Vernon Reid, Steve Bernstein, Wolfgang Muthspiel, Joel Harrison, and others pay tribute to George Harrison. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Sept. 26 at 8.)

ROLLING STONES
Entering their fifth decade as the world's premier rock-and-roll band, the Rolling Stones undertake yet another juggernaut of a tour, this time to promote their compilation "Forty Licks." Now fronted by a knight of the British Empire, the band that was once the prototypical gang of libidinous cutthroats seems positively regal. With the Pretenders. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Sept. 26 at 8. ♦ Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands. 307-7171. Sept. 28 at 8. ♦ Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Sept. 30 at 8.)

GOMEZ
Back before the recent rock revival, Gomez was seen by many as the great hope of the British music scene. It wasn't, but several years later the band still produces inventive songs topped by the earnest vocals of singers Ben Ottewell and Tom Gray. (Roseland. Sept. 27 at 7:30.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
The Spanish flamenco vocalist Miguel Poveda, joined by his longtime collaborator, the guitarist Chicuelo, and dancers. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. For more information, call 545-7536. Sept. 29 at 7.)

"MAKING A LIVING TOUR"
The Virginia-born guitarist and singer-songwriter Paul Curreri brings his country blues to town for a show with the Brooklyn-based artist Andy Friedman, a contributor to this magazine, who will talk about and display his drawings onstage. (Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery, at Bleecker St. 614-0505. Oct. 1 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Sept. 26: The **Concept** brings together ?uestlove, the drummer for the Roots; Eric Krasno, the guitarist for Soulive; George Porter, the bassist for the Meters; Bill Summers, a veteran of Herbie Hancock's Headhunters band; Casey Benjamin, the saxophonist and keyboardist from Project Logic; and the vocalist Ivan Neville for some funky jamming.

BLARNEY STAR
43 Murray St. (732-2873)—Sept. 27: The Donegal fiddler **Tommy Peoples** and the Bostonian guitarist **Billy Kelly.**

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Sept. 27: **Victoria Williams.** With her latest release, "Sings Some Ol' Songs," Williams joins the ranks of such fellow country, folk, and blues performers as Willie Nelson, Joni Mitchell, and Dave Van Ronk, by turning to the Great American Songbook and pop standards. Fans of the Louisiana-bred singer's voice—a mildly cloying, Kewpie-doll instrument—will find the album a delight. She splits the bill with her husband and former Jayhawk front man **Mark Olson,** whose recent exploration of folk rock, "December's Child," seems to have been written without any thoughts of a hit single.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—A trio of underground luminaries whose fame resides beneath the radar of Top Forty radio—the singer-songwriters **John Doe, Kristin Hersh,** and **Grant Lee Phillips** (once upon a time of the bands X, Throwing Muses, and Grant Lee Buffalo, respectively)—join forces for an evening of homegrown alternative rock. Sept. 26: **Gordon Gano** steps out on his own after twenty years with the seminal Violent Femmes (who are also touring and will hit town next week with Gano out front). The witty and acerbic lyricist and singer drafted an impressive array of musicians for his first solo album, "Hitting the Ground," including

Lou Reed, P. J. Harvey, Frank Black, and John Cale. Sept. 29: **Neko Case & Her Boyfriends.** Before her current incarnation as an alternative-country singer, the Chicago resident Case was a drummer in a pop-punk outfit, and that hard-hitting sensibility jells perfectly with her dark tales. Case, who also performs with the Vancouver-based band the New Pornographers, is on the road in support of "Blacklisted," her lush and hypnotic new solo release. Sept. 30: Once tagged as "the new Sugarcubes," Iceland's quirky electronic collective **Gus Gus** fuses club beats with unashamedly pop melodies.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Sept. 26: The members of the **Tin Hat Trio** have used the viola, accordion, toy piano, guitar, mandolin, and Dobro among other instruments to make a kind of alternative chamber music that mixes classical influences, jazz progressions, and Old World rhythms. Their most recent work, which can be found on the album "The Rodeo Eroded," successfully explores the experimental-country side of things, with contributions from Willie Nelson and the Phish drummer Jonathan Fishman. Sept. 27: The Los Angeles ensemble **Brazzaville,** featuring veterans of Beck's and Tom Waits's bands, crafts sophisticated pop where languid bossa-nova-influenced rhythms and gritty lyrics conjure dark deeds on steamy dead-end streets.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Sept. 26: The Canadian twin sisters **Tegan & Sara** have built-in novelty appeal, but they also have above-average songwriting skills that render their snappy pop acceptable to anyone who might be suspicious of overly produced youngsters.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—Sept. 26: **Joseph Arthur,** whose claim to fame was being the first pop act on Peter Gabriel's globe-trotting label Real World. As you might expect, this young singer-songwriter shares his mentor's flair for moody grooves and inspired arrangements.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through Sept. 28: They love the vocalist **Stacey Kent** in Britain, and now American fans of high-end jazz singing are beginning to warm to her distinctly nasal utterances. Kent's latest album, "In Love Again," exhibits her unerring taste in repertoire (it's a tribute to Richard Rodgers) and an understandable rapport with the saxophonist Jim Tomlinson, her husband. Dining.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through Oct. 5, the magnetic "42nd Street" veteran **Christine Ebersole,** whose repertoire ranges from Judy Garland to Joni Mitchell. ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, the **Loston Harris** trio holds forth through Dec. 31.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through Oct. 5: **Darlene Love** and **Freda Payne.** This bill features one rock-and-roll legend and one fondly remembered one-hit-wonder, but their duo show is not a warmed-over oldies act. Both women can still sing and they take on a host of standard, pop, R. & B., and gospel material to prove it. (A dual reading of "A Song for You" and "All in Love Is Fair" brings down the house.) An unexpected delight.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Sept. 24-25: The **John Patitucci** quartet. It seems that everywhere you looked in the past few years you found the bassist Patitucci, who put a spin on the work of everyone from Roy Haynes to Wayne Shorter. Judging from his own fine recordings, Patitucci is also an elegant composer and bandleader. Sept. 26-29: The **Jimmy Smith** quartet. The Hammond organ was certainly around before the mid-fifties, when Smith started messing with it, but can anyone remember what it was used for? His influence is so pervasive that his name has become practi-

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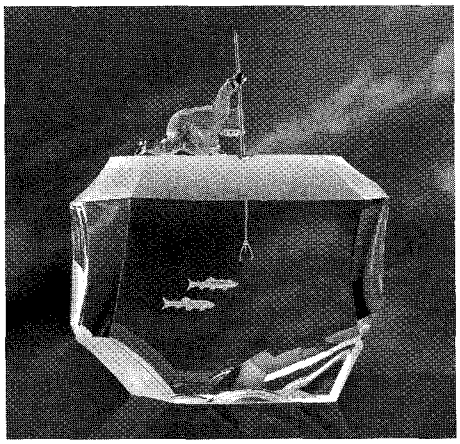

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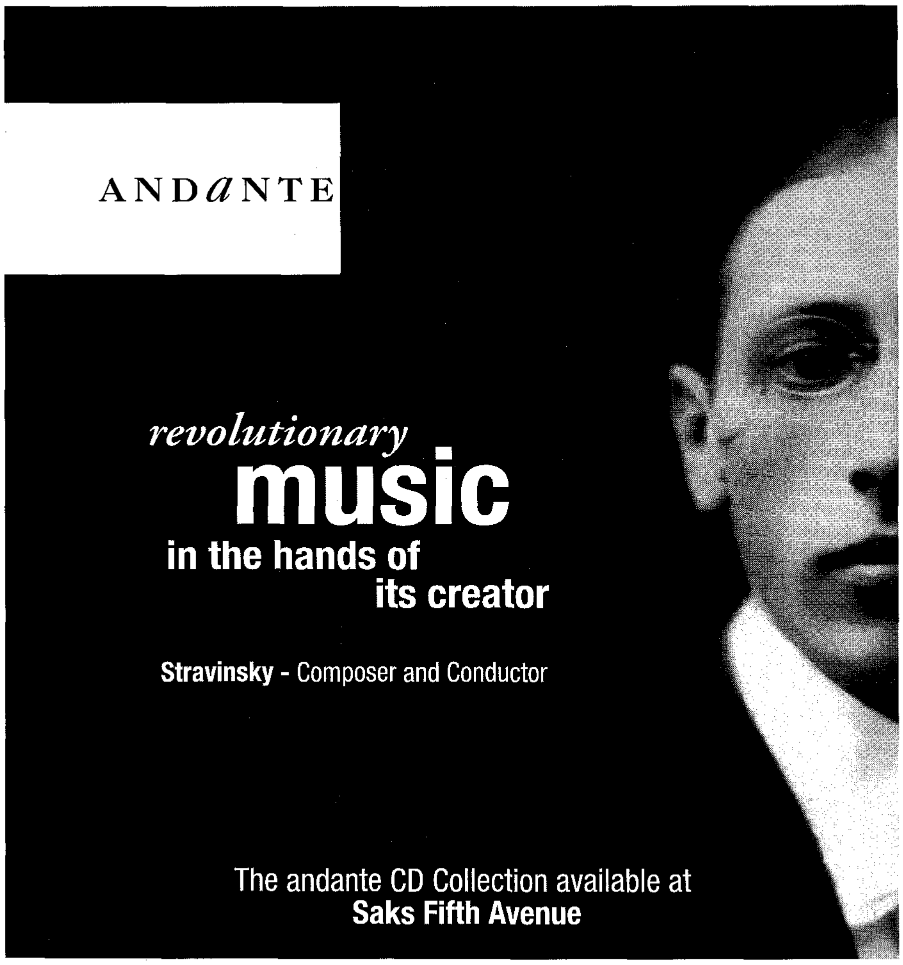

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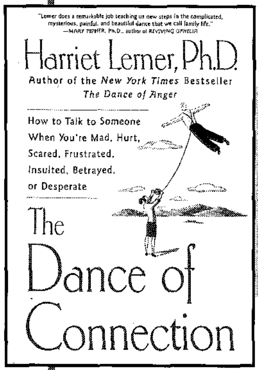
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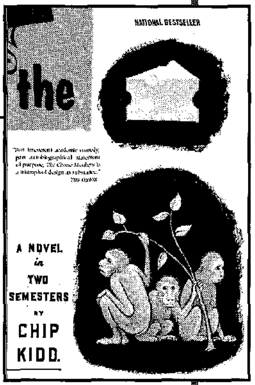

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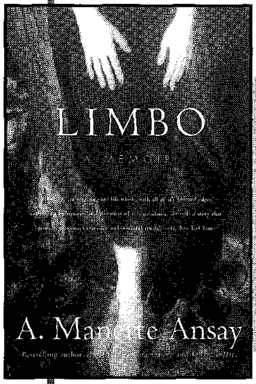

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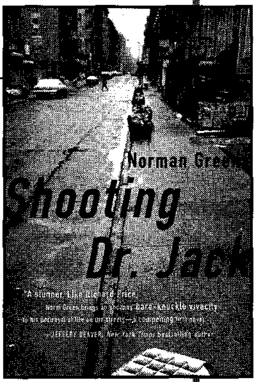

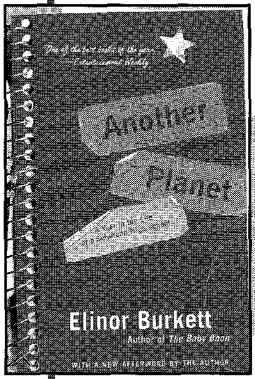

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cally synonymous with the instrument. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul**.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Hank Mobley was known as "the middleweight champion," an uncommonly subtle tenor saxophonist whose serene tone shunned the girth and grit of his hard-bop peers. Mobley, who died in 1986, was also a much esteemed composer, and his tunes—including "This I Dig of You"—will make up much of the repertoire of this tribute, which was organized by the trumpeter and arranger **Don Sickler.** A surprise guest tenor saxophonist opens the program on Sept. 25, followed by **Seamus Blake** on Sept. 26, **Eric Alexander** on Sept. 27, and **Ralph Moore** on Sept. 28-29. Dining.

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (994-9493)—Sept. 27: Smart, sexy, and so in control of an audience that resistance to her icy charms is next to impossible, **Ute Lemper** displays the kind of vocal strength and interpretive imagination that just aren't found in the vast majority of cabaret artists. She brings the same focus and intensity to songs by Kurt Weill as she does to such contemporary composers as Tom Waits and Elvis Costello.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Sept. 25: A rare appearance by the **Willem Breuker Kollektief.** Trafficking in disciplined anarchy, these spectacularly skilled Dutchmen mate classical precision with free-jazz ideas and spice it all with Marx Brothers antics. They're irreverent, virtuosic, and downright funny.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Going out on a limb, musically speaking, is **Joe Lovano's** habit, but his nonet (appearing here through Sept. 29) gets his feet back on the ground. In this exceedingly polished ensemble, the ace saxophonist explores vintage bebop and swing, bolstered by the once obscure Cleveland jazzman Willie (Face) Smith, whose impressive work is featured on Lovano's acclaimed 2000 album, "52nd Street Themes." The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

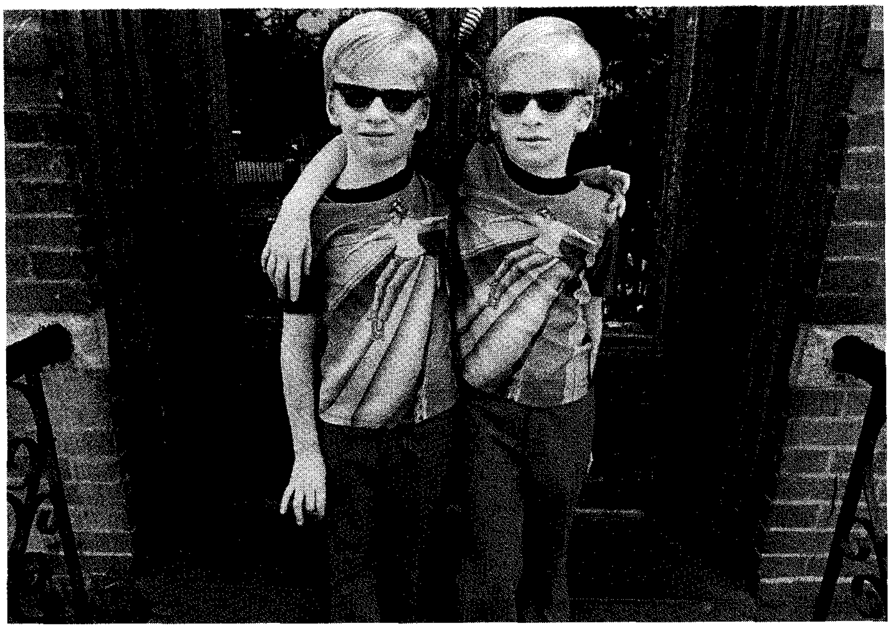
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Richard Avedon: Portraits"** presents the photographer's iconic images of the country's most influential figures, taken from the forties to the present, alongside portraits of humbler folk. Through Jan. 5. ♦ **"Gauguin in New York Collections: The Lure of the Exotic"** crowds the downstairs of the Robert Lehman wing with a few familiar masterpieces—the Met's "Ia Orana Maria (Hail Mary)," the Albright-Knox's "Manao Tupapau (Spirit of the Dead Watching)"—and many lesser paintings, drawings, sculptures, prints, documents, and oddities (portrait ceramic vessels, a carved walking stick representing a serpent and a wooden shoe). Saluting the Empire State's ravenous hunger for Gauguin, the unchoosy mélange affords a pungent sense of the artist's uneven, seductive mojo. Through Oct. 20. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City. (708-9480)—The museum's new home, until 2005, presents a slew of shows perfect for its big warehouse of a space, including the ongoing **"To Be Looked At: Painting and Sculpture from the Collection."** (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—**"Going Forth by Day,"** a five-part digital-projection cycle by Bill Viola. Through Jan. 12. ♦ The museum's expansions have failed in some places (SoHo) and succeeded mightily in others (Bilbao). Perhaps in reaction to this, the newest entry on the roster—an exhibition partnership with St. Petersburg's State Hermitage Museum and Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum—tries a different strategy: doing much with little.

"Connecting Museums" is the first foray into shows that share collections, and it includes only three paintings: Velázquez's 1654 portrait "Infanta Margarita Teresa in a Pink Gown," from the Hermitage; "Portrait of Baertje Martens," from 1640, one of the Rembrandts in the Kunsthistorisches Museum collection; and the museum's own "Before the Mirror," by Manet, from 1876. Pampered princess, sturdy bourgeoise, and anonymous courtesan—the wildly varied visions of three masters are presented as a mini-history of European portraiture, from Velázquez's depiction of distant majesty to Rembrandt's psychologically acute contemplation of the middle class to Manet's secret glimpse of a demi-mondaine's back. Through Oct. 20. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)



Twins snapped by Harvey Stein in 1977, at Bateman (see Photography).

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Joan Mitchell, the long-underrated second-generation Abstract Expressionist who died in 1992 at her home near Monet's Giverny, spoke paint. A sumptuous retrospective confirms her as a major artist. Mitchell's varieties of abstract landscape conjure nature (including the difficult human kind, in ornery and exacerbated moods) out of pigmented stuff with authoritative abandon. Lessons from Pollock, de Kooning, and, yes, Monet are apparent but thoroughly subsumed. As with great Monets, you sometimes can't tell what you are looking at. It's paint, sure, but as a medium of metaphysical mystery. Through Sept. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Exposed: The Victorian Nude,"** from Tate Britain, is a strong historical show about an era when jumpiness about sex had bizarre effects in art. Literary and classical themes provided the alibis for displaying naked females. Popular guises included Shakespearean fairies, virtuous heroines (Lady Godiva rides again, and again), Roman decadents, and the like. (One understands John Ruskin's wedding-night shock: according to British painters of the time, all ladies' pudenda are baby-bottom sleek.) For male nakedness, the excuse was propaganda for robust healthiness. Lust lurked, and smut reigned. A hand-colored Lewis Carroll photograph of a young girl posed as a Titian Venus leaves an exceptionally dire aftertaste. In this context, the finicky sensuality of the Pre-Raphaelites looks heroic. A turn toward frankness around the turn of the century—in the gloomy nudes of Walter Sickert and the too little known William Orpen—offers a fresh invention: actual people. Orpen's felicitously titled "The English Nude" (1900), a Rembrandtesque tour de force, presents a regular, interesting woman on a rumpled bed. Its mystery is that of really lived life. Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

DIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS
548 W. 22nd St. (989-5566)—Jo Baer, a major control freak of high minimalism in the nineteen-sixties, responded to Donald Judd's Kennedy-era death-of-painting dicta by proving that oil on canvas could be as thuddingly self-evident as any box. She made dead-flat expanses of white or gray with crisp black or color-striped borders on thick stretchers. The paintings, wonderfully installed here, emit an undimmed, Arctic glamour and do much to bring the seventy-three-year-old painter back from undeserved obscurity. The later works are blocky, inexplicable paintings hung below knee level. Lovely prints from 1974, based on language systems, end this imperturbable show. Through June 15. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

LELAND BELL
Famous teachers and gadflies are often mediocre artists; but Bell (1922-91) is an exception. This abbreviated retrospective, making the last stop of an East Coast tour, shows off his winning combination of fluid outline, sweetened color, and rigid, balletic choreography. The results are like fusions of Stuart Davis and John Flaxman, at once modernist and fiercely traditional, impersonal and faintly kinky. "Masterpiece" is a musty honorific these days, but a few of these canvases, including a piercing self-portrait from 1976, deserve it. Through Sept. 28. (Salander O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606.)

DEBRA BERMINGHAM / WALT KUHN
Bermingham's outdoor paintings feel breezy and amicable, along the pastel-picturesque lines of someone like Wolf Kahn. Indoors, she's a whole different painter. Bathed in a murky, cool daylight (or is it moonlight?), her arrangements of antique toys and masks, along with the occasional, half-lit self-portrait, feel eerily tranquil, like a collaboration between Morandi and Hitchcock. / In the side gallery, a selection of portraits by Kuhn (1877-1949) showcases his decisive, colloquial directness. Through Oct. 5. (DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111.)

TOLAND GRINNELL
The thirty-four-piece "Pied à Terre" luggage set totes everything from a dog's bed, bowls, and kibble—three separate trunks just for Fido—to a fireplace and a functioning kitchen sink. Its largest piece, a queen-sized bed with mink blanket and attached tent, sits next to its smallest, a box holding a dozen neatly stacked condoms, a bottle of lubricant, and a gilded dildo. Given Grinnell's unstinting craftsmanship, his attitude toward these elaborately impractical luxury items—ironic approval? compromised disdain?—seems beside the point. Through Oct. 19. (Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929.)

SOL LE WITT
LeWitt's "wall drawings"—murals generated by written instructions—keep getting wilder, as if the Conceptualist were intent on trashing his own reputation for cerebral cool. But, as always, it turns out that he has just raised the stakes in his game. The gallery walls bear flat acrylic renderings of huge 3-D geometric forms: blocky "L" and "U" shapes and asymmetrical gridded layouts. At first, shrieking primary and secondary colors blast the eye, but after a few minutes they become almost restful, as you adjust to the pitch of their uniform intensity. The works suggest resurrected, brassy styles of the nineteen-sixties—Pop, Op, hard-edge, "Primary Structures," and supergraphics—which were eclipsed by more fashionable minimalist sobriety like LeWitt's. Through Oct. 12. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292.)

RAY SMITH
Hawks and doves alike will be confused by this show in which the painter abandons his signature magic realism and instead presents works depicting either American military iconography or run-down homes in Kansas. The centerpiece is a sixteen-foot painting of two aircraft carriers shown in mirror image (think Rumsfeld's Rorschach test). The glitz of the war-related pictures, which also include kaleidoscopic, digitally manipulated photographs of gunboats and a painting of a torpedo bathed in golden light, is far more appealing than the drab gray of the houses, which undercuts whatever political statement Smith may be attempting. Through Oct. 5. (Ramis Barquet, 41 E. 57th St. 644-9090.)

"THE HEAVENLY TREE GROWS DOWNWARD"
An interest in collage and an eye for alchemy link the three artists in this beautifully installed exhibition, Fred Tomaselli, Phillip Taaffe, and the late underground cult figure Harry Smith (1923-91). Tomaselli reveals a dazzling Archimboldo-like style in his small painting "Head," made of cutout pictures of eyes, noses, and lips. Taaffe goes Venetian in swirling abstractions that bear a disarming resemblance to endpapers. (More interesting is a tribal-looking painting of teeth). Smith is best represented by a compilation of trance-inducing abstract films. Through Oct. 19. (James Cohan, 41 W. 57th St. 755-7171.)

Short List

AVIGDOR ARIKHA
Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900.
Through Oct. 5.

TREY FRIEDMAN
David Findlay, Jr., 41 E. 57th St. 486-7660.
Through Sept. 28.

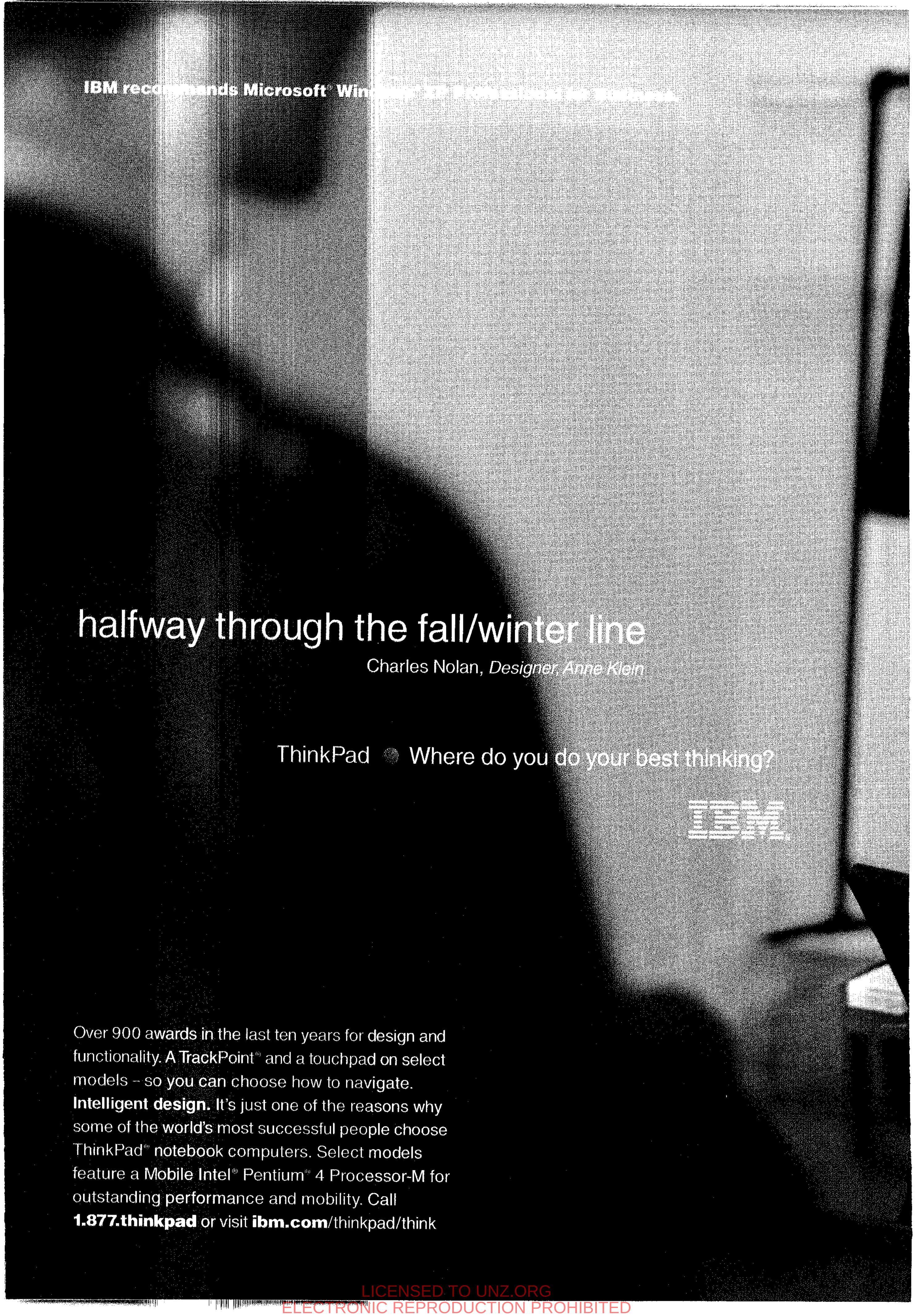
MARYAN
Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 861-7338.
Through Oct. 12.

ANDREW MASULLO
Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 397-6780.
Through Oct. 19.

ALIX PEARLSTEIN
Artemis Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 445-0444. Through Oct. 5.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

PAUL AMENTA
Drywall and joint compound are the only materials listed for Amenta's second show, but instead of installations, he has made serene, starry nocturnes, each patiently incised into the blue-green paper surface of the drywall. One expects Amenta's various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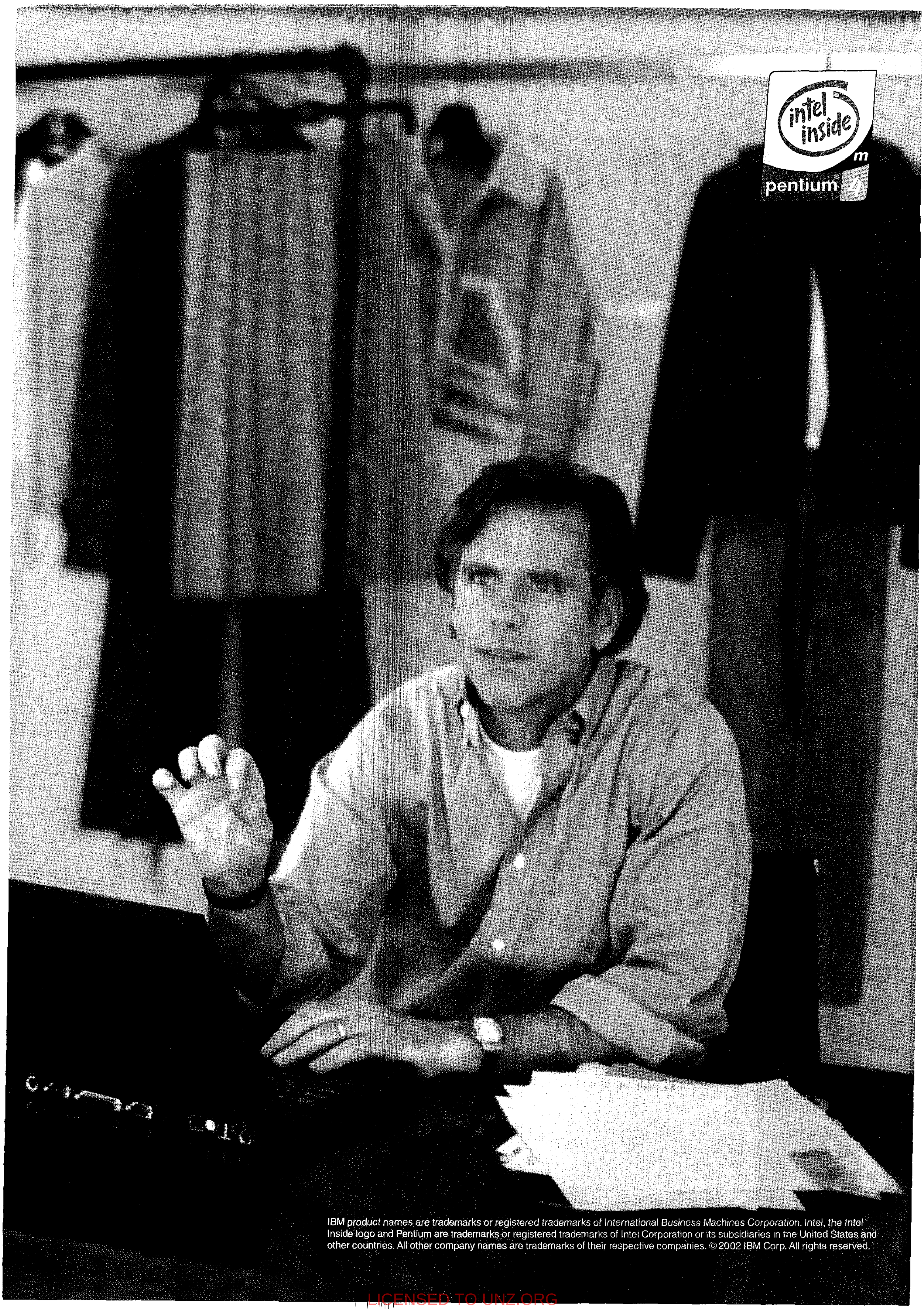

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combinations of tangled branches and constellations to feel mock sentimental (as the show's heavy-handed title, "Quivering Twilight," suggests). Instead they offer a modest, genuine, stargazer's shiver. Through Oct. 5. (Marvelli, 526 W. 26th St. 627-3363.)

GEORG BASELITZ
Startlingly sweet-tempered new canvases, many of them tondos, by the topsy-turvy Siegfried of German painting. Taken from old Russian socialist-realist pictures and from holiday snapshots, the inverted subjects are people in amiable pairs and groups, mastering a tractor, perhaps, or posing in swimsuits. Swift, cartoony drawing; liquid or buttery paint; stencilled polka-dot patterns; and some cute colors (pink, lavender, pale yellow) make for slightly forced friskiness, like that of a clumsy person anxious to make friends. The works seem formally weak on purpose. Baselitz as a warm puppy? Beware of dog. Through Oct. 5. (Pace Wildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 421-3292.)

ANN CRAVEN
Large-scale paintings of birds—yellow canaries so pumped up they could be busted for steroids, lovebirds with feathers the color of cotton candy—that owe less to Audubon than they do to a rack of kitschy postcards. In each canvas the fauna (the main gallery's aviary is preceded by several deer) is lavishly painted in sharp focus, while the floral background (which might have been swiped from a wallpaper sample) is blurred. This tension between nature and artifice suggests that Craven is staking some conceptual claim. But ultimately the show's pleasure lies in its unabashed decorative oomph. Through Oct. 5. (Gasser & Grunert, 524 W. 19th St. 807-9494.)

RUSSELL CROTTY
In this charming walk-in solar system of a show, the artist, an amateur astronomer, mounts elaborate ballpoint-pen drawings of night skies on large Lucite spheres that dangle from the ceiling like wayward planets. (The drawings are based on telescopic observations Crotty made from his homemade observatory in Malibu.) Some are explicitly pictorial, like the ring of ponderosas that form a panorama below a speckled expanse of the Milky Way. In others, the detail has an all-over obsessive quality that suggests a science experiment by a maniacal minimalist. Through Oct. 26. (CRG, 535 W. 22nd St. 229-2766.)

JAMES HYDE
This sampler-style show (in glass, nylon, wood, papier-mâché, you name it) offers an overview of the work of one of the finest abstract talents of the nineties. Though he's kept a lower profile than Jessica Stockholder and David Reed, Hyde has renewed the tradition of painterly abstraction in ways that are just as distinctive and seductive as theirs. His glass boxes alone (there are two beautiful examples here) constitute a snazzy and unforgettable achievement. For devotees, though, this show may be mildly disappointing, since most of the works are variations on previous formats. It appears that Hyde is doing some (well-deserved) laurel-resting. Through Oct. 5. (Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 929-2262.)

MICHAEL JOO
Fifty coyotes, made of plasticine-covered taxidermy forms, stake out the front gallery. In the back, a fur-clad figure lies on a block of snow. Whether he's supposed to be dead or just chilling is unclear (unlike the transparent figure itself, which appears to be made of ice but is actually cast from resin). The taxidermy forms invoke Nauman, the coyotes conjure up Beuys, and the refrigeration unit (that snow is real) recalls Matthew Barney. Joo overwhelms his enigmatic installation with so many references that the intended aura of mystery feels more like missing information. Through Oct. 5. (Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 367-9663.)

MICHEL MAJERUS
One canvas here announces "No style, no points," and this young German painter, who tears through contemporary art styles and pop-culture references, certainly lives by his motto. Eminem, King Kong, and Spider-Man show up in a pair of photo-based banners, while across the room three canvases ape early Stella stripes. Two black-and-white canvases decorated with Space Invader icons simultaneously riff on minimalism, Christopher Wool, and digital art. The show's considerable energy comes from the spectacle of the entire installation, but painting by painting it flails. Through Oct. 19. (Petzel, 535 W. 22nd St. 680-9467.)

ROBERT MELEE
The artist has invented a term, "baloneyism," to evoke his conflation of the banal and the glamorous (e.g., minimalist paintings made from bottle tops or noodles). But what's really going on in his work would seem to fall more in the province of professional psychiatrists. At least, that's the first thing that pops in your mind when you see Melee's videos and photographs of his mother, sitting around wearing nothing but a fright wig and feather boa while her son improvises other perverse ways to test her devotion. Masters of abjection like Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy have nothing on Mrs. Melee. Through Oct. 12. (Kreps, 516A W. 20th St. 741-8849.)

JULIA SCHER
There's an emotional bonus in paranoia, and it comes from feeling that someone cares enough to pay tireless and expensive attention to you. That's one point of Julia Scher's latest baroque surveillance installation, a chain-link corral featuring live and taped video, shifting light levels, and alternately hectoring and seductive voices telling us what to do and endeavoring to make us want to do it. Rolled pink "security blankets" are on offer to assuage anxieties. But a voice insistently cooing "Of course the blanket is not a weapon" redoubles doubts. Scher's obsessive project has grown from a jejune gloss on "1984" into a mind-bending "2001." If she gets any better, the only way to resist her malign charm will be to stay home. Through Oct. 12. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

CLAUDE VIALLAT
New paintings on tarpaulin, tents, a bedsheet, and sewn canvas scraps by the best of the French "Support/Surface" group, which thirty years ago brought eccentric formats to hard-core formalist abstraction with typically Gallic style. Viallat daubs loose grids of a fuzzy lozenge shape of one color, which is outlined in another color and set against a third, ground color. Arbitrary variations abound, and laconic tastiness doesn't quit. Going simultaneously to extremes of brainy rigor and decorative luxuriance is a fine trick, but it has never played well in New York. Can we give Viallat another chance, perhaps for NATO's sake? Through Oct. 12. (Cheim & Reid, 547 W. 25th St. 242-7727.)

Short List

DIANA COOPER
Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 727-3323.
Through Oct. 12.

MIKI LEE
Lyonswier, 511 W. 25th St. 242-6220.
Through Oct. 5.

JOHN MORRIS
D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460.
Through Oct. 5.

ELLIOTT PUCKETTE
Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 26th St. 563-4474.
Through Oct. 12.

KARIM RASHID
Gering, 534 W. 22nd St. 646-336-7183.
Through Oct. 5.

SCOTT RICHTER
Harris, 529 W. 20th St. 463-9666.
Through Oct. 5.

TABLES FOR TWO

FIVE POINTS
31 Great Jones St. (253-5700)—This Prairie-style café near the Public Theatre seems to serve as the NoHo crowd's cozy secret cabin, hidden in plain view behind a bright-red awning on an urban-wasteland block. Neighborhood regulars (including celebrities like James Gandolfini and Sheryl Crow, couples with Shirley Temple-quaffing children, and a carpenter or two) return often for hipped-up comfort food like buttermilk fried chicken, a truly great house-cured, double-cut pork chop (one night it came with fire-charred peaches, on another with garlic mashed potatoes, mustard greens, and mission figs), good grilled steaks with beer-batter onion rings, and "oven baked pasta" (a.k.a. lasagna). The rest of chef Marc Meyer's Mediterranean-influenced menu changes daily, according to what looks good at the market, so there are always surprises. But after three years in business the place is otherwise so suspiciously overlooked that it makes you wonder if there is actually a neighborhood conspiracy to keep it under wraps.

It's not just Meyer's menu that changes often—it's also the décor, or more specifically the elaborate floral arrangements. On a recent night, four-foot-tall bouquets of pale-green hydrangeas lined the split-log fountain that runs through the center of the candelit arched dining room, and a roasted-fig salad with Maytag blue cheese and toasted almonds and lobster-and-shrimp fritters with aioli were the desirable appetizers. A few nights earlier, deep-green magnolia leaves filled the huge vases, and the menu included wood-oven-roasted bluepoint oysters with butter-braised leeks, tea-smoked trout with honeydew, avocado, and mint, and a seafood brodetto with fava beans. (Meyer is a big fan of favas—what more do you need to know?—and once turned them into hummus for the mezze plate.) His daily soups are simple and wonderful: English pea with Riesling and crème fraîche; cauliflower purée with Parmesan croutons. And there are always several kinds of raw oysters to start, as well as a serious rotating selection of olives (Bitettos and Castelvetranos from Italy, Nyons and Picholines from France). Dessert is probably good, but who knows? Finishing with one of the salads or another appetizer always seems like a better idea. (Open daily for dinner, Sundays for brunch and dinner. Entrées $17-$25.)

—*Emily Nunn*

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

TORBEN GIEHLER
Five large-scale, digitally inflected paintings that hover between abstraction and representation in a synth-pop palette of caution-tape orange, Hi-Liter yellow, and iMac blue. Three are vertiginous grids that evoke skyline landscapes. The others are mountain scenes that could be computer flight simulations programmed by Crayola. All have an impressive muscular appeal. Through Oct. 12. (Koenig, 249 Centre St., at Grand St. 334-9255.)

PEPÓN OSORIO
In his 1995 show "Badge of Honor," Osorio made an installation out of two dwellings, a prison cell and a barrio apartment. This time he re-creates the gray netherworld between them—the Philadelphia Department of Human Services, where he has been artist-in-residence for a year. The quiet of this industrial-carpeted office simulacrum is interrupted only by recordings and videos of a client family. The sight lines are obstructed by a fenced-in storage locker filled with their belongings. Osorio has never shied from the obvious: next door, in a testament to human vulnerability, a huge piñata heart pumps out the sound of his pulse. Through Oct. 19. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232.)

Short List

JOHN BISBEE
Plane Space, 102 Charles St. 917-606-1268.
Through Oct. 4.

CHUCK CONNELLY
Lennon, Weinberg, 560 Broadway. 941-0012.
Through Oct. 12.

RICHARD WOODS
Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.
Through Oct. 19.

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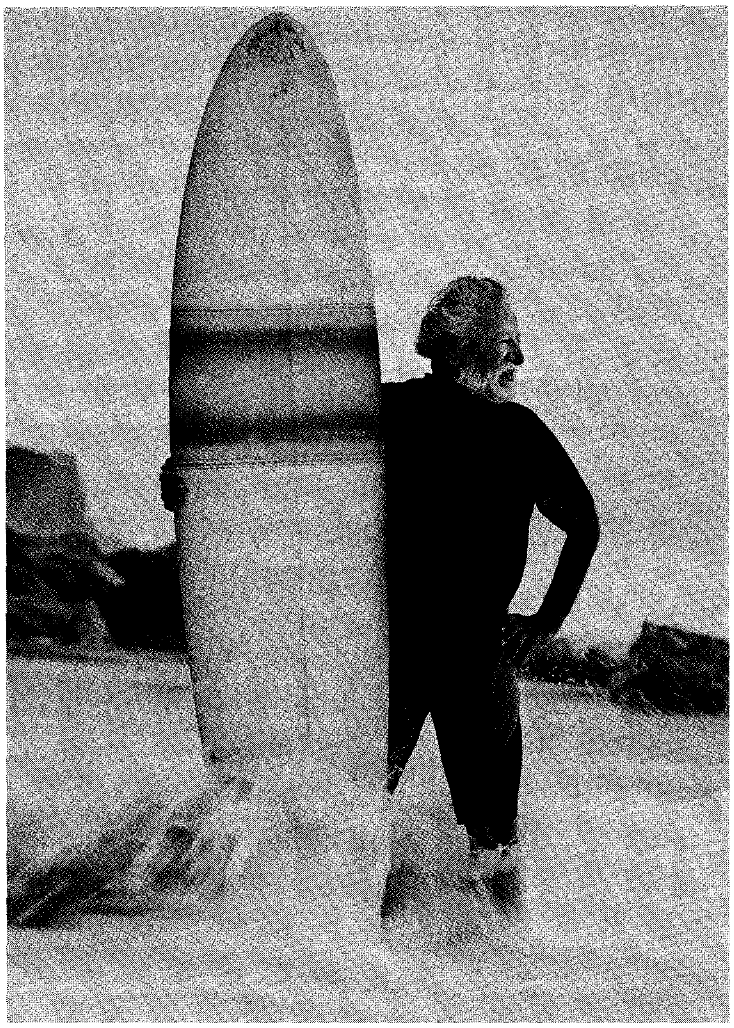

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PHOTOGRAPHY

ALLEN GINSBERG
Vintage small-format "drugstore prints" and much more recent silver-gelatin enlargements glossed with Ginsberg's own musings map postwar alternative culture from Beat to Merry Prankster. And Ginsberg's deadpan photo-booth style has a way of sneaking up on you. An ecstatic quality permeates these portraits of poets as young men; a 1964 snap of a rumpled, broken, and obviously depressed Jack Kerouac sitting alone with a suitcase is simply devastating. Through Oct. 12. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

TODD HIDO
People are not Hido's subjects, but their presence is felt in unsettling ways. Known for eerily colored prints of houses at night, lit from within, Hido uses no flash, just a long exposure time near a window. His technique hasn't changed, but now Hido has hit the road, standing under street lamps and shooting roadside landscapes that look like strangely beautiful accident scenes without the victims. In one bluish print, tire tracks streak through a wet snow—perhaps the car crash is just outside the frame. In another, an endless cracked asphalt path lies between two scrubby hills over which any type of miscreant could jump. Through Oct. 5. (Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752.)

PAUL SHAMBROOM
The photographer attends town meetings and accentuates their theatricality: in large-scale, panoramic shots in digitally enhanced color, enormous platforms dwarf the presiding locals. The endearing banality of the scenes redeems them—travel mugs of coffee, the words "hard work" stencilled on a cap, faces hung in tedium. Through Oct. 12. (Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 627-2410.)

"THE NEW BAUHAUS"
This survey of rare, vintage photographs from the Chicago Institute of Design might be the best student show you'll ever see. In the early nineteen-forties, under the influence of Institute founder László Moholy-Nagy, unknowns such as Margaret De Patta and Eugene Bielawski were able to achieve effects as abstract and expressionist as those of de Kooning and Klein through the use of experimental techniques—such as waving flashlights around the studio. In the nineteen-fifties and sixties, the I.D.'s legendary teaching combination of Aaron Siskind and Harry Callahan inspired students such as Joseph Jachna, whose "Untitled, 1964" nearly steals the show. This sharp-focus, near-abstract triad of white frost, black hillside, and perfectly blank sky hints at some great esoteric revelation. Through Nov. 9. (Silverstein, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930.)

"VINTAGE NEW YORK"
On view are forty years' worth of vintage black-and-white prints of New York scenes, mostly of people, with a few images of city infrastructure thrown in for good measure. The earliest work, Jim Steinhardt's "The Bead Seller," from 1947—in which a cigar-toting hulk of a man is pictured with strands of fake pearls strung across his arm—could have been taken in the first years of the last century by Lewis Hine. Victor Friedman's 1969 shot of an imperiously coiffed Elizabeth Arden makes it seem like hippies weren't allowed anywhere near the city, whereas Amy Arbus's nipple-flashing biker chick, from 1983, makes it clear that there's room for everyone here. Through Oct. 19. (Bateman, 560 Broadway. 925-7951.)

Short List

HARRY CALLAHAN
Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.
Through Oct. 12.

LEE FRIEDLANDER
Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166.
Through Oct. 11.

LAURENT MILLET
Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave. 989-7600.
Through Oct. 26.

JOEL-PETER WITKIN
Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819.
Through Oct. 12.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

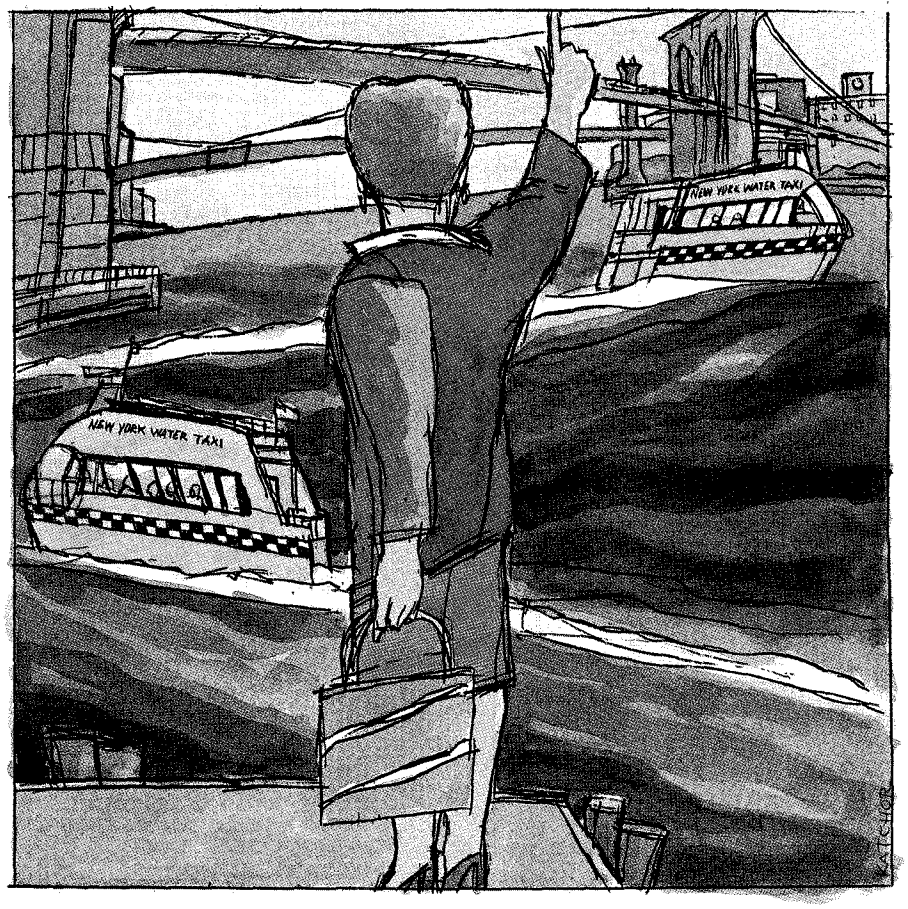
SOTHEBY'S
Oct. 1 at 10:15 A.M.: An auction of carpets and tapestries from the gallery of the renowned carpet dealer Doris Leslie Blau. The variety of the sale is exceptional—there are items not only from Bessarabia, Anatolia, Persia, and India (such as an Agra carpet from northwest India, estimated to bring up to a hundred and fifty thousand dollars) but also from England, Ireland, Austria (several modernist and Art Nouveau carpets from around 1900), and the U.S. ♦ Oct. 1 at 2: Carpets from various owners, including offerings from China, France, Anatolia, and Central Asia. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
Sept. 25 at 10 A.M. and 2: A sale of prints. ♦ Sept. 26 at 10 A.M.: Impressionist and modern art. Jean Dufy's "Place de la Concorde" is among the highlights of the sale. ♦ Sept. 26 at 2: Postwar and contemporary art. ♦ Sept. 27 at 10 A.M. and 2: An auction of watches and jewelry. ♦ Oct. 1 at 10 A.M. and 2: Decorative art works from the twentieth century, including lithographs by Alphonse Mucha, furniture by George Nakashima, and a rare "Aquarium" glass-and-metal table lamp from the Handel Company. ♦ Note: In conjunction with the publication of Elizabeth Taylor's book "My Love Affair with Jewelry," Christie's hosts a public exhibition of thirty pieces from her private collection, including the Krupp and Taj Mahal diamonds, both gifts from Richard Burton. Sept. 30-Oct. 14; no tickets required. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

DOYLE
Sept. 25 at 10 A.M.: An auction of furniture, paintings, and decorative art works. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

SWANN
Sept. 26 at 10:30 A.M. and 2: Modern press and illustrated books, including works featuring art by Gorey, Mucha, and Rackham (a limited-edition copy of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," from 1908). (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

INTERNATIONAL ART AND DESIGN FAIR
Fine and decorative art works from the early twentieth century to the present, offered by dealers from America, Canada, and Western Europe. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. Sept. 27-Oct. 2. For more information, call 642-8572.)



The New York Water Taxi goes into service this week (see Above and Beyond).

BEN KATCHOR

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
"Elektra," with Deborah Polaski, Karita Mattila, Marjana Lipovšek (making a long-overdue début at the house, as Klytämnestra), Wolfgang Neumann, and Alan Held; James Levine conducts. (Sept. 25 at 8 and Sept. 28 at 1:30.) ♦ Franco Zeffirelli's production of **"Turandot,"** with Andrea Gruber (in the title role), Hei-Kyung Hong, Vladimir Galouzine, and Hao Jiang Tian; Carlo Rizzi. (Sept. 27 and Oct. 1 at 8.) ♦ **"La Cenerentola,"** with Sonia Ganassi, Joyce Guyer, Patricia Risley, Juan Diego Flórez, Alessandro Corbelli, Simone Alaimo, and John Relyea; Edoardo Müller. (Sept. 28 at 8.) ♦ Giordano's **"Andrea Chénier,"** one of Plácido Domingo's favorite verismo vehicles, with Sylvie Valayre, Juan Pons, and Wendy White; Levine. (Sept. 30 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Puccini's rarely performed triptych of short operas, **"Il Trittico,"** has always seemed to work better in pieces than as a whole, largely because the pieces express such sharply different stylistic interests. James Robinson's production sensibly makes no attempt at unity and gives each work its full due: penumbral, sweaty realism for the visceral melodrama of "Il Tabarro"; cool clarity for the sentimental piety of "Suor Angelica"; Marx Brothers buffoonery (featuring a home-movie blowup of Florence) for the

low high jinks of "Gianni Schicchi." A brilliant array of young singers—notably, Fabiana Bravo, Carl Tanner, Maria Kanyova, Ursula Ferri, and, in the first and third operas, America's answer to Bryn Terfel, the booming Mark Delavan—blaze forth under the astute conducting of George Manahan. (Sept. 25 at 7:30 and Sept. 29 at 1:30.) ♦ In **"Dead Man Walking,"** Jake Heggie once again displays his prodigious gift for giving singers flattering vocal lines, but the demands of tragic opera seem beyond his grasp. The opera is based on Sister Helen Prejean's memoir about her spiritual work with Death Row inmates—conflated here into a narrative about one vicious murderer, Joseph De Rocher. This is noble stuff, and Terrence McNally has crafted a libretto that leavens the story's raw emotions with clever twists of humor. But Heggie's vaguely Bernsteinian score, clumsily orchestrated, can do little more than push the plot along: the monologues seem endless, and the duets, for all their blunt power, are notable for how little the characters truly interact. The work of the dedicated cast, however, makes it worth hearing: the effective leads are Joyce DiDonato and John Packard, and outstanding among the supporting singers are Robert Orth, who gives an angry, gripping performance as the father of one of De Rocher's victims, and Adina Aaron, as Prejean's helper Sister Rose. John DeMain is the conductor. (Sept. 26 at 7:30.) ♦ With Gerald Steichen replacing DeMain. (Sept. 28 at 8.) ♦ City Opera's exquisite production of **"Madama Butterfly,"** with Maria Gavrilova, Mika Shigematsu, Scott Piper, and Charles Robert Stephens; Brent McMunn conducts. (Sept. 27 at 8.) ♦ **"Don Giovanni,"** with Mel Ulrich (in the title role), Pamela Armstrong, Marquita Lister, Rinat Shaham, John Tessier, and Kevin Burdette; George Manahan. (Sept. 28 at 1:30.) ♦ The première of a new production of **"Salome,"** featuring Eilana Lappalainen in the title role and Mark Delavan as Jochanaan; Manahan. (Oct. 1 at 7:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL: "GALILEO GALILEI"
Philip Glass's latest operatic pageant concerns the sixteenth-century scientist, whose support of Copernican planetary theory got him in so much trouble with the Catholic Church. Glass's principal collaborator this time is the director Mary Zimmerman, who wrote the libretto with input from the composer and the redoubtable librettist Arnold Weinstein. (The story is told in reverse chronological order, with the infant Galileo listening to an opera by his father, the composer Vincenzo, at the close.) Glass clearly identifies with groundbreaking historical figures, but he doesn't seem to have broken any new musical ground in quite a while—though he is still very capable of reaching the sublime. William Lumpkin conducts the Eos Orchestra in the New York première of the work, a production by Chicago's Goodman Theatre; John Duykers heads the cast. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Oct. 1 at 7:30. Through Oct. 5.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
A subtly subversive program from André Previn, that laid-back master of luxe. Following the spacious grandeur of Haydn's Symphony No. 102 (once ubiquitous, now a rarity) and the sanguine charm of Ravel's Piano Concerto in G Major (with Jean-Yves Thibaudet) comes Shostakovich's Symphony No. 6, a manic and melancholy work that even by the composer's standards wears its layers of irony like chain mail. (Sept. 26 and Oct. 1 at 7:30, Sept. 27 at 11 A.M., and Sept. 28 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5656.)

MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC SYMPHONY
George Manahan, City Opera's music director, comes back to his old school with presentations of symphonic music by Copland (the Suite from "Appalachian Spring"), Ravel (the Piano Concerto in G Major, with Xiayin Wang), and Sibelius (the Symphony No. 3 in C Major). (Borden Auditorium, Broadway at 122nd St. Sept. 27 at 8. No tickets required.)

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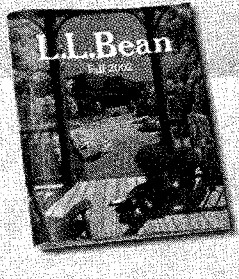

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public concerts with the Orchestra of St. Luke's. Sept. 27 at 8: Two finalists conduct music by Puccini, Debussy ("La Mer"), Respighi, and others. ♦ Sept. 28 at 7: The two other finalists lead a program including works by Mendelssohn, Strauss (the "Four Last Songs," with Christine Brewer), and Stravinsky (the "Firebird" Suite). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.)

RECITALS

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER: "THE ART OF THE PIANO"
The city's supreme chamber-music series opens its season with a celebration of the keyboard, featuring a whole squadron of pianists (including Jonathan Biss, Anne-Marie McDermott, and Lee Luvisi) playing works by Mozart, Ravel (the two-piano version of "La Valse"), Bach (the Concerto in C Major for Three Pianos), and others, along with the violinist Joseph Silverstein, the cellist Fred Sherry, and other friendly colleagues from the string department. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5788. Sept. 25 at 8.)

ENSEMBLE SOSPESO
A season-opening concert dedicated to works by György Kurtág, the mercurial Hungarian miniaturist whose music, as rewarding as it is puzzling, is an intimate joining of speech and song. "The Sayings of Peter Bornemissza" and "Scenes from a Novel," both performed by the soprano Lucy Shelton, are among the featured works. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 25 at 8.)

MERIDIAN ARTS ENSEMBLE
New York's most adventurous brass quintet pays tribute to Frank Zappa, playing three of his pieces (including "Dupree's Paradise" and "Echidna's Arf") along with works by composers who influenced him (Stravinsky, Nancarrow, Gesualdo) and pieces by his friends (including Don van Vliet, a.k.a. Captain Beefheart). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Sept. 25 at 8.)

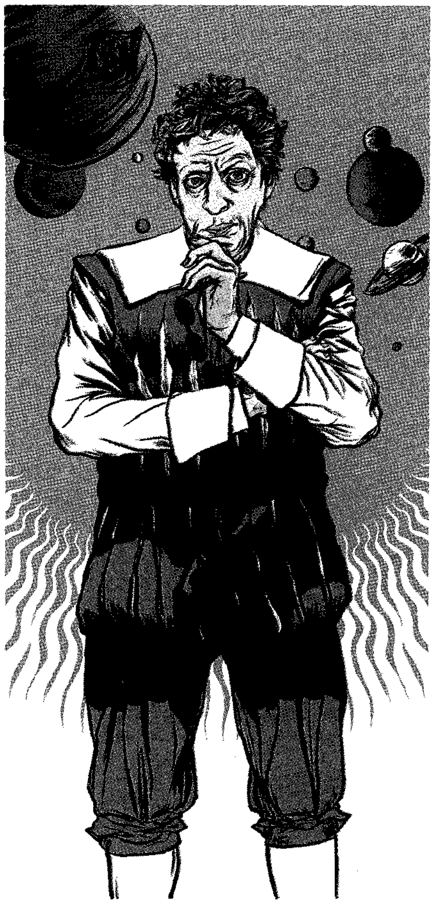
A GEORGE CRUMB CELEBRATION
Crumb's music, with its embrace of "primitive" performance rituals and its spaced-out conception of musical time, can sometimes seem like too much of a nineteen-seventies product, but the persuasive intensity of his greatest works has assured his lasting influence. The Angel Orensanz Center for the Arts mounts a three-day festival in his honor, which will include not only performances of such works as "Black Angels" and "Ancient Voices of Children" (by such musicians as the soprano Susan Narucki and the Talujon percussion quartet) but a talk and a master class given by the affable Crumb himself. (172 Norfolk St. 866-927-2829. Sept. 27-29. For a complete listing of concerts, go to the festival Web site, www.georgecrumbfestival.com.)

DAVID SHIMONI
The pianist, the winner of the 2001 Young Artist Auditions of the National Federation of Music Clubs, performs a program of Bach, Beethoven (the Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111), Chopin, and Barber (the Sonata). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 28 at 8:30.)

MUSIC BEFORE 1800
The series begins its season with a concert by some hometown heroes of the early-music scene, the viol consort Parthenia and the Choir of Corpus Christi Church, who perform a program of secular music by William Byrd (including "Ye Sacred Muses") and his great pupil, Thomas Morley. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Sept. 29 at 4.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

TAXI!
In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," Walt Whitman's 1856 paean to the beauty of New York Harbor, the poet declared, "A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others will see them, / Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the falling-back to the sea of the ebb-tide." Whitman's prediction about the future of passenger ferries might have been a little off, but Tom Fox, the founder of New York Water Taxi, shares Whitman's optimism. Bright-yellow fifty-three-foot-long eco-conscious catamarans (designed for low wakes) will offer frequent service between Brooklyn, the Wall Street area, and the west side of Manhattan. The boats have a smooth ride, even at top speed, and they have plush, carpeted interiors with padded rail-car-style seats and big windows, so passengers can enjoy the view. "I'm making this the un-ferry," Fox says. "It's a fun way to get around town." On Sept. 24 at 8:15, a fireworks display over the lower Hudson River will mark the start of service, which commences the following morning at 6:30. The first three days are free. For more information, call 742-1969.



The Brooklyn Academy of Music presents Philip Glass's opera "Galileo Galilei," beginning October 1.

NATHAN FOX

NEW YORKER FESTIVAL
The annual gathering of the magazine's writers, poets, artists, and editors runs Sept. 27-29. For up-to-date listings, visit www.newyorker.com.

READINGS
Sept. 25 at 7: Tama Janowitz, Peter Bogdanovich, Scott Spencer, and other friends of the late writer Laurie Colwin mark the tenth anniversary of her death with a reading of her works. (GQ Lounge, 110 University Pl. For more information, call 445-8393.) ♦ Sept. 26 at 7:30: Fred Jerome reads from "The Einstein File," his account of the F.B.I.'s long-term investigation of the scientist. (Brecht Forum, 122 W. 27th St. 242-4201.) ♦ Sept. 26 at 7:30: John Aboud, Michael Colton, and other contributors to "One Nation, Extra Cheese" read from the Modern Humorist's new guide to American culture. (Barnes & Noble, 4 Astor Pl. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS
Sept. 25 at 5: The actor Theodore Bikel talks about his life and his forthcoming autobiography. (The Arthur Seelen Studio Theatre, Drama Book Shop, 250 W. 40th St. 944-0595, ext. 417.) ♦ Oct. 1 at 7: The art historian Al Boime discusses the influence of El Greco on Jackson Pollock. (Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 423-3587.)

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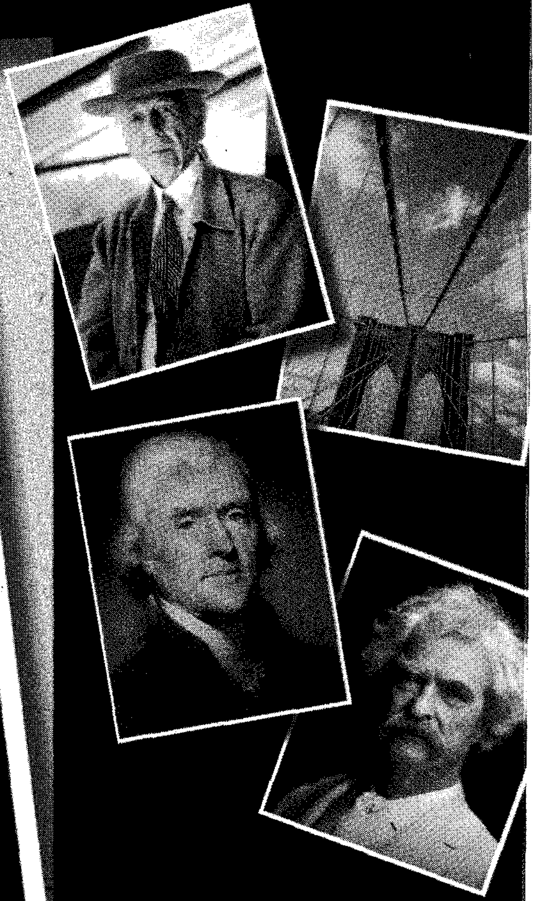

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Thomas Jefferson painting by Rembrandt Peale, White House Historical Association; *Mark Twain* Mark Twain House, Hartford, CT

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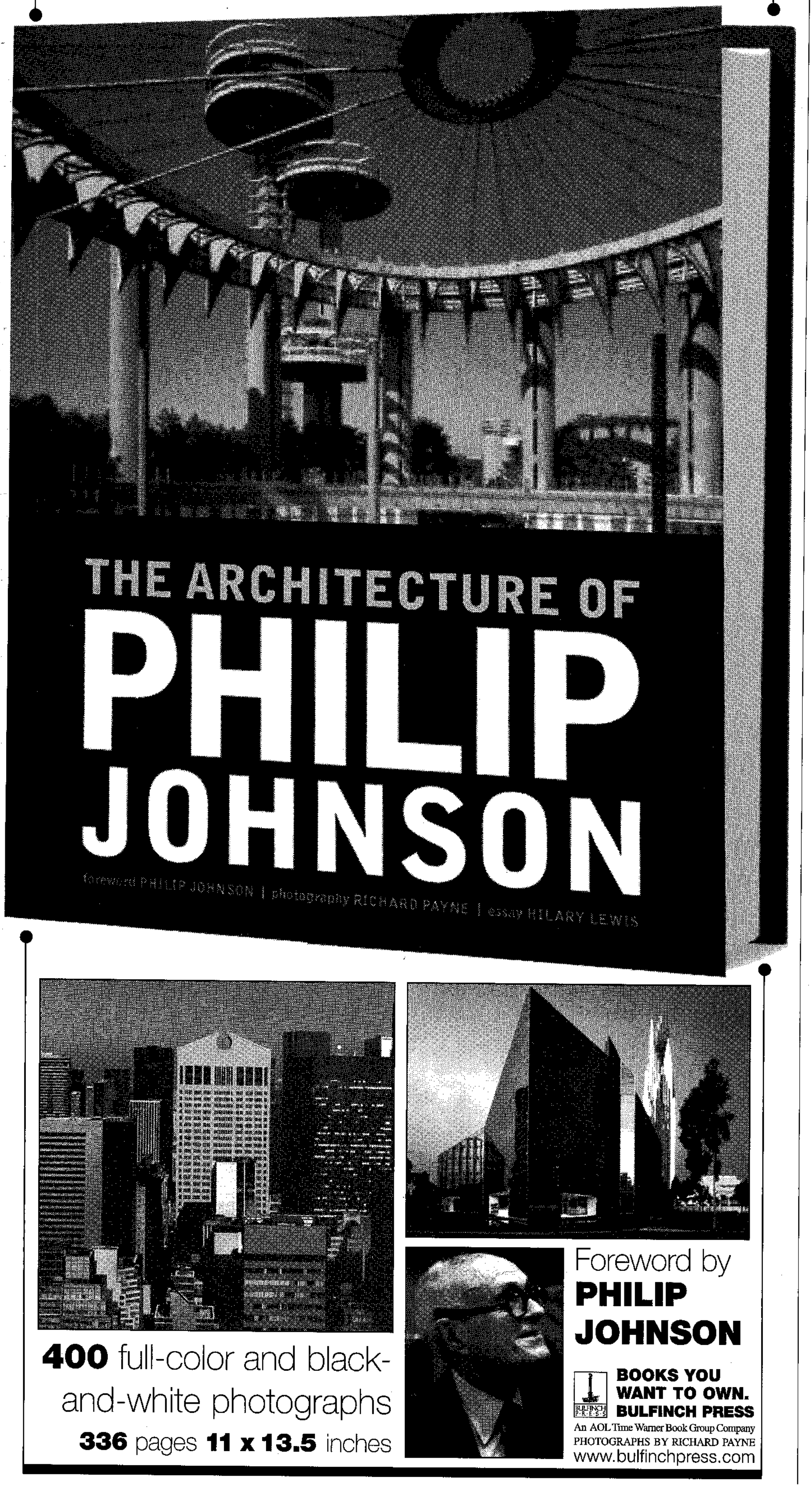
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BOOK CURRENTS

Pot Luck

"I'm the tour guide for a global gourmet-ganja holiday." So writes Brian Preston, a Canadian journalist, with just a hint of gloating, in **POT PLANET** (Grove), a gimlet-eyed and often hilarious account of the author's round-the-world reefer safari. With Britain's downscaling of penalties for marijuana possession currently stirring up controversy, Preston's book comes along at a propitious moment. And while Preston admits to recreational use and appears to condone efforts to legalize the drug he offers a surprisingly clear-headed view of potheads worldwide. Researching marijuana mores in twelve countries, from Canada to Cambodia, Preston rubbed shoulders—and puffed on joints—with devotees who fry their morning pancakes in hemp oil, discuss the subtle differences between Sweet Skunk and Bubbleberry as if they were comparing fine wines, have their last names legally changed to Cannabis, and, in the case of one enterprising Australian, dream of opening the Big Bong Burger Bar, a kind of edible-marijuana McDonald's.

In **LOADED** (Little, Brown), Robert Sabbag, a reporter for *Rolling Stone*, offers a somewhat darker view of the herb. This true-life tall tale about Allen Long, a frustrated American documentary filmmaker who began smuggling pot out of Mexico and then Colombia in the seventies, is like a cannabis version of the film "Blow," featuring countless near-death episodes in a rickety, marijuana-stuffed DC-3. Whereas Preston eventually concludes that marijuana is just "one of those goofy adult things like booze and sex," Sabbag's more critical examination of how the stuff actually finds its way into the United States reveals a major "triumph of greed over good judgment."

—*Mark Rozzo*

PETER HAMLIN

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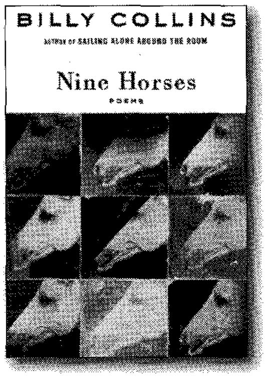
BILLY COLLINS
AUTHOR OF SAILING ALONE AROUND THE ROOM
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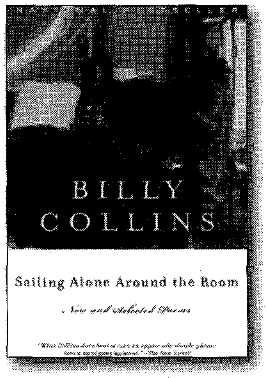
POEMS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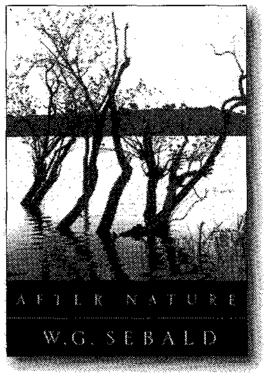
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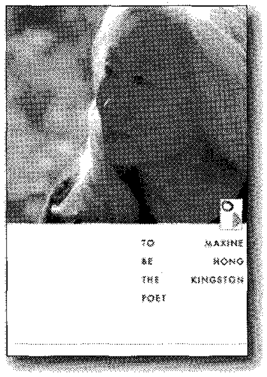
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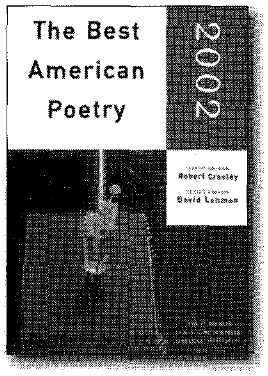
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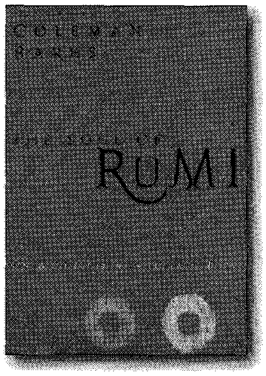
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MOVIES OPENING

BIGGIE & TUPAC

The documentary filmmaker Nick Broomfield ("Kurt & Courtney") investigates the unsolved murders of the rap stars Christopher Wallace and Tupac Shakur. Opening Sept. 27.

DAYDREAM BELIEVER

Debra Eisenstadt wrote and directed this drama, shot in digital video, about the lost illusions of an aspiring actress (Sybil Kempson) who moves to New York. Opening Sept. 25. (Pioneer.)

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

A fortieth-anniversary rerelease of David Lean's desert epic. Opening Sept. 25. (Ziegfeld.)

MOONLIGHT MILE

After the accidental death of his fiancée, a young man (Jake Gyllenhaal) develops an uneasy relationship with her parents, played by Susan Sarandon and Dustin Hoffman. Written and directed by Brad Silberling ("City of Angels"). With Holly Hunter. Opening Sept. 27.

SHANGHAI GHETTO

A documentary about Jewish refugees who escaped the Nazis by fleeing to Japanese-occupied Shanghai. Opening Sept. 27. (Quad Cinema.)

SKINS

Chris Eyre ("Smoke Signals") directed this drama set at the Pine Ridge reservation about Rudy Yellow Lodge (Eric Schweig), a policeman fighting alcohol abuse. With Graham Greene as Rudy's troublesome brother. Opening Sept. 27.

SWEET HOME ALABAMA

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Sept. 27.

THE TRIALS OF HENRY KISSINGER

A documentary based on a book by Christopher Hitchens that questions whether or not the former Secretary of State should be prosecuted for war crimes. Featuring interviews with William Safire, Seymour Hersh, and Al Haig, among others. Opening Sept. 25. (Film Forum.)

THE TUXEDO

Jackie Chan plays a bumbling chauffeur who sports gadget-laden formal wear, in an action comedy directed by Kevin Donovan. With Jennifer Love Hewitt. Opening Sept. 27.

WASABI

A comedic thriller that begins when a detective (Jean Reno) travels to Tokyo because his old flame has died mysteriously and left everything to him, including a shopaholic daughter. Luc Besson produced and wrote the script. In French. Opening Sept. 27.

FILM NOTES

ALIAS BETTY

It's been a good year for French films, and the latest offering from the director Claude Miller is no exception. Based on a Ruth Rendell novel, the movie tells the story of an emotionally unstable grandmother (Nicole Garcia) who, after her young grandson's death, decides to kidnap a battered child and, with the help of her daughter (Sandrine Kiberlain), bring him up as their own. Kiberlain gives a riveting performance, and the carefully calculated scenario unfolds with emotional complications worthy of Truffaut. The story is presented from many points of view, including those of the kidnapped child's family—it's a character study with many characters—and Miller's sure hand fashions all the bits into a provocative nightmare of motherhood. In French.—*Bruce Diones* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Quad Cinema, and Sutton 1 and 2.)

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THE BANGER SISTERS

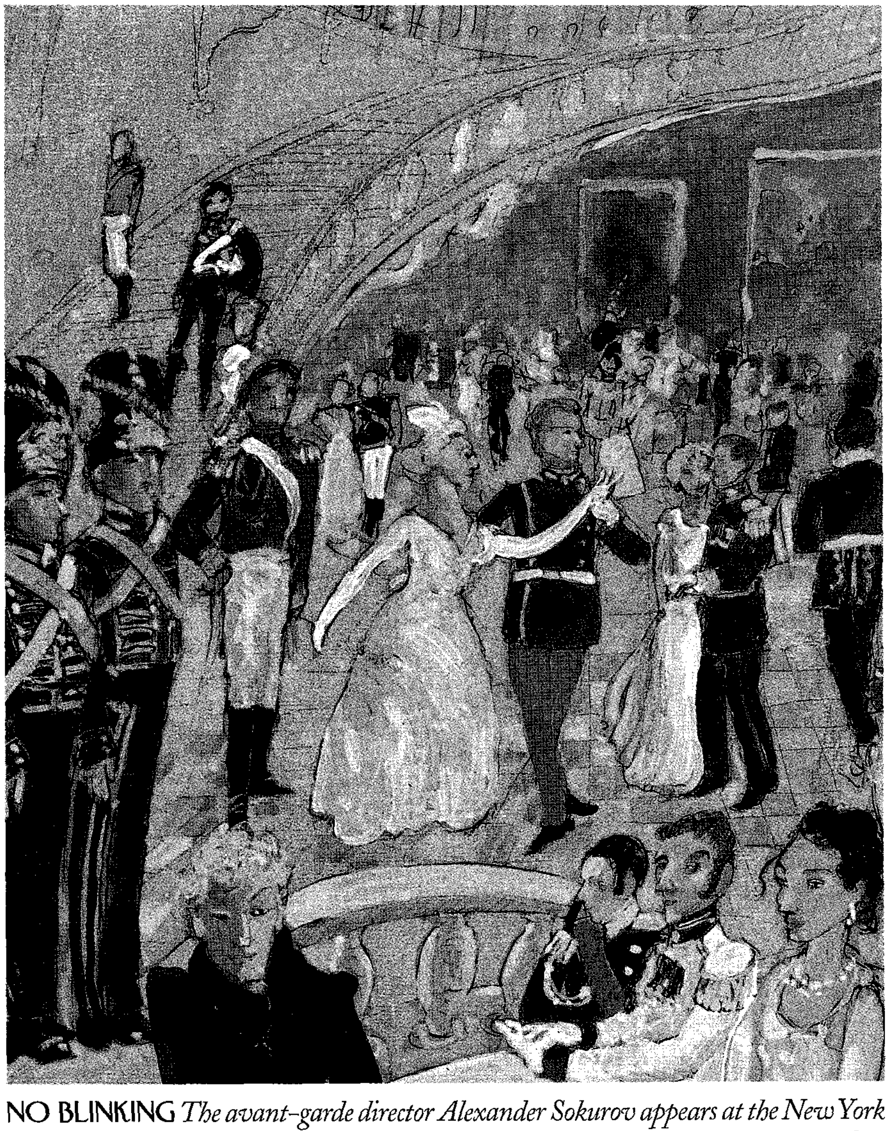
Goldie Hawn, wearing her pants very tight, does some real acting as a funny, lewd good-time girl, an ex-groupie who has always been too careless to put anything together for herself. Dismissed from her job as a bartender on Sunset Strip, she goes looking for her old friend and fellow-groupie, Vinnie (Susan Sarandon), who long ago shipped out to Phoenix, married well, and became a part of the community. The two actresses set off a few sparks in their scenes with each other, but the idea that middle-aged women need to liberate themselves by discovering their inner groupie is, well, bananas. The screenwriter Bob Dolman wrote and directed this pedestrian, desperate-to-shock movie, which feels less like a story about women's lives than some corkscrewed male fantasy.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 9/23/02.) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, 62nd & Broadway, Olympia I and II, and Union Square.)

BARBERSHOP

A mellow, good-spirited comedy set on the South Side of Chicago, in which a restless young man (Ice Cube) comes to understand the value of his father's business. There's the college-educated barber (Sean Patrick Thomas), the rap-star barber (Eve), the gangster barber (Michael Ealy), the white b-boy barber (Troy Garity), and an old guy who plays checkers all day. These characters bounce off each other according to type, but every now and then someone gets off an original line. The most impressive performance is given by Cedric the Entertainer. Made up to look like a latter-day Frederick Douglass, he's a raspy-voiced sage unafraid to take down Rosa Parks, of all people. His rants get the whole shop up in arms, with everyone cracking wise.—*Michael Agger* (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

CITY BY THE SEA

For long stretches, Robert De Niro, speaking in quiet, even tones, keeps this dolorous family melodrama on track. He plays Vincent LaMarca, a successful Manhattan homicide detective. His father was a convicted child murderer, and his son, Joey (James Franco), whom he hasn't seen in years, is a junkie living like a rat in an abandoned casino on the boardwalk of Long Beach, Long Island. As if all these troubles weren't enough, Joey kills a drug dealer in a fight, and then is suspected by the police of also killing a cop. Even though the story is based in fact, "City by the Sea" offers an almost grotesque pileup of tragedies. Will Vincent arrest his own son? Are the sins of the fathers visited upon the sons (or, in this case, grandsons)? Ken Hixon's screenplay lays in the Arthur



ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

NO BLINKING *The avant-garde director Alexander Sokurov appears at the New York Film Festival this week with "Russian Ark," a film that consists of one long, unbroken shot through the Hermitage and employs more than eight hundred actors.*

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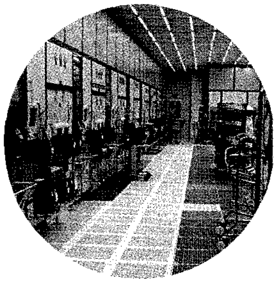

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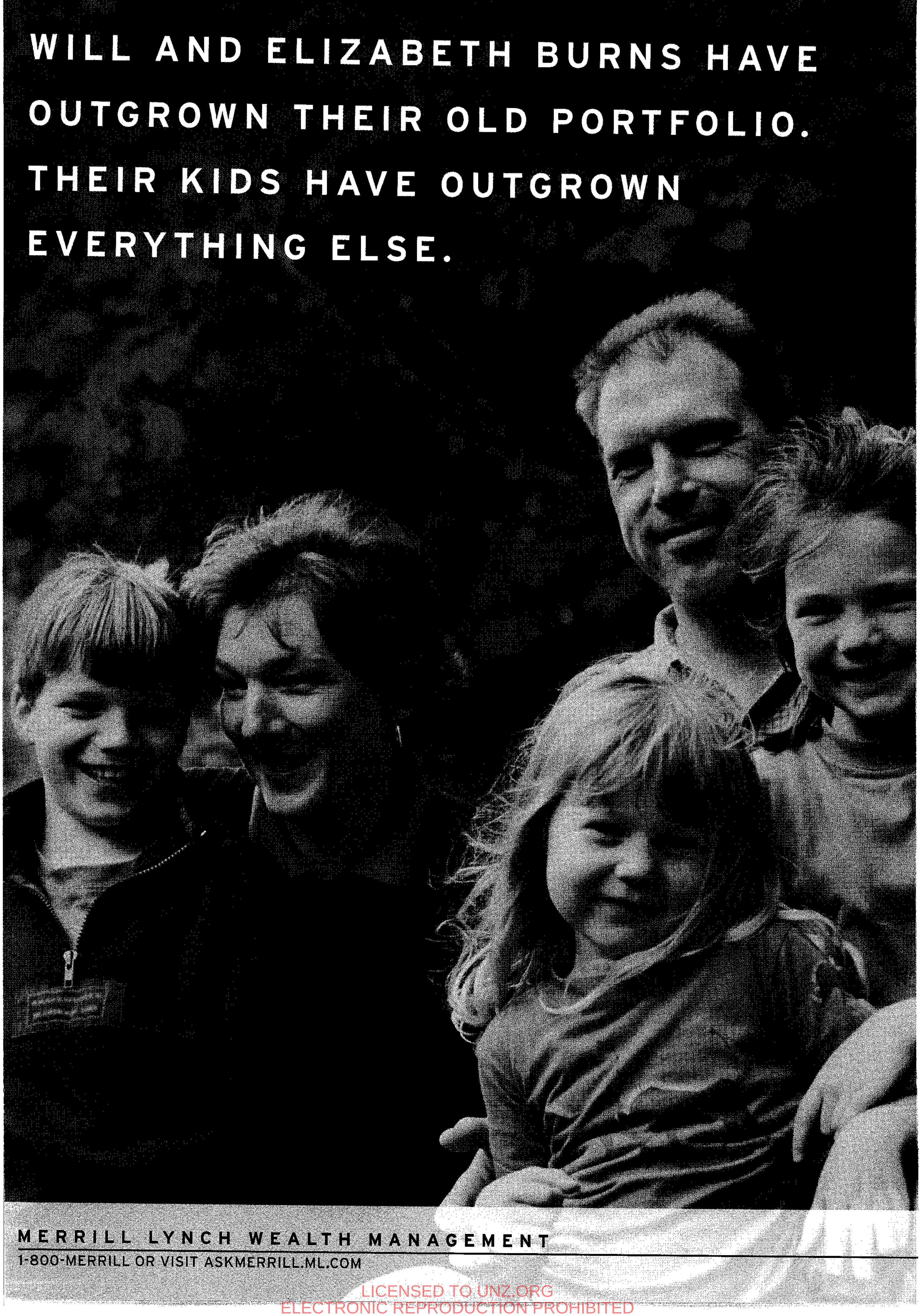
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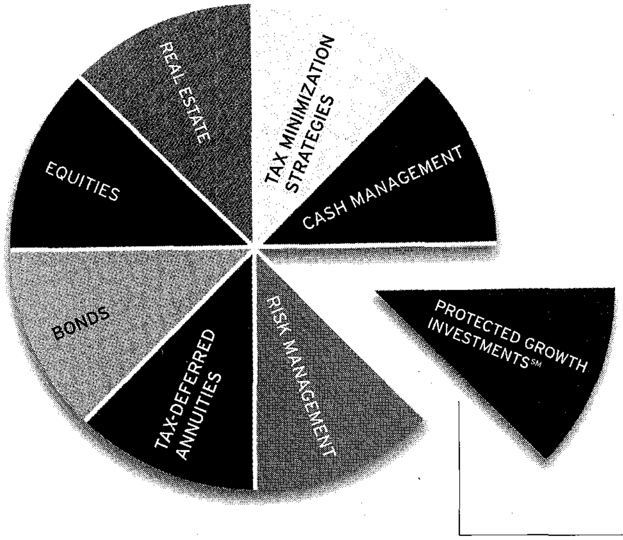

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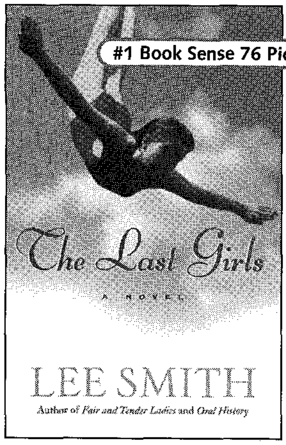

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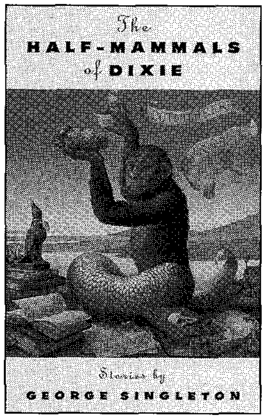

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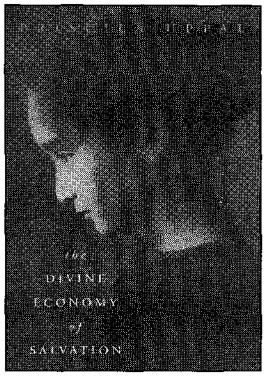

"[The Divine Economy of Salvation] begins as a simple mystery and turns into a work of great depth and seriousness."
–Kirkus Reviews, starred review

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Miller bricks very carefully. But when father and son get together at last, Hixon's writing falls into the turgid clichés of a TV drama. The end is a big letdown.—*D.D.* (9/9/02) (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

8 WOMEN

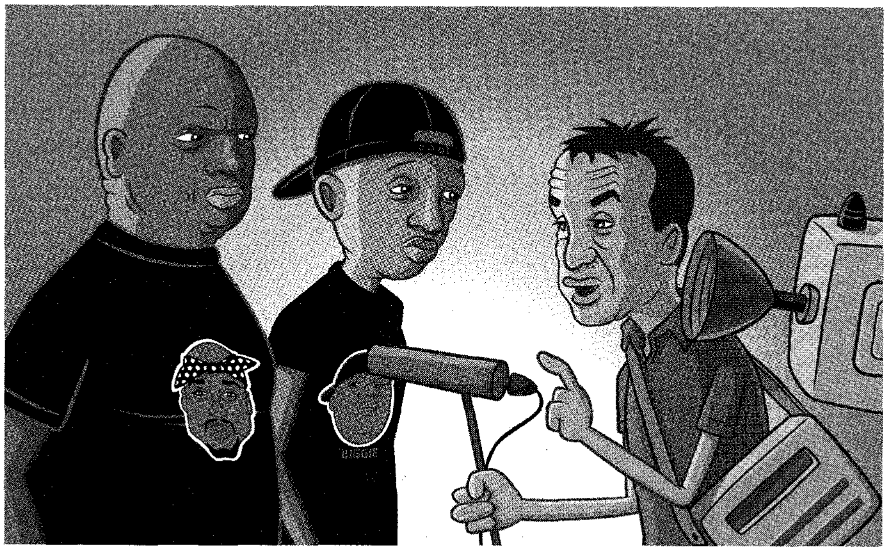
François Ozon's new picture is a tonic of sorts, a hot-hued, postmodern, murder-mystery musical hen party. The setting is virginal and unashamedly fake—a snowbound house interrupted by the arrival of a horde of famous French actresses. The wisest way to list them without giving offense is alphabetically: Fanny Ardant, Emmanuelle Béart, Danielle Darrieux, Catherine Deneuve, Isabelle Huppert, Virginie Ledoyen, Firmine Richard, and Ludivine Sagnier. For sheer fetishistic whoopee, there is very little to rival the sight of Deneuve and Ardant getting into a catfight, all hisses and claws, and then sinking to the floor to stroke each other's whiskers. Ozon plainly worships the idea of the grand dame, and the movie allows him both to honor and deride his own devotion. There's lots of dancing, a striptease, and a surfeit of arch self-consciousness. Yet something of substance does creep through this concoction. In the competitive jostling of the women, we sense the eternal face-off of beauty against the beast of time. Nobody is more touching in this regard than Darrieux, her soft wrinkles unable to erode the exquisite heroines she once incarnated for Max Ophuls. In French.—*Anthony Lane* (9/16/02) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE FOUR FEATHERS

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE GOOD GIRL

A comedy, darkly told, with a plot that never fails to attract: is there a way out of my narrow life? Jennifer Aniston puts on a Texas accent and plays Justine Last, a clerk at a faceless superstore, which seems to be the new epicenter of modern angst. Her co-workers include a sarcastic goth girl (Zooey Deschanel), a hyper-Christian security guard (Mike White), and a hunky, teen-age malcontent (Jake Gyllenhaal) who oh-so-subtly calls himself Holden. Soon, Justine and Holden are discovering the pleasures of the stockroom together. The movie is well acted and very funny about delusions, especially the writerly kind. It also complicates our loyalties by making Justine's husband (John C. Reilly) a decent, likable guy, even if he does smoke too much pot. Everything seems poised for a great finale, with the melancholic afterglow of a good Raymond Carver story. But the movie loses its tone—tragic moments, including a suicide, get treated in a flimsy way, and camp triumphs over content. Directed by Miguel Arteta and written by White.—*M.A.* (Angelika Film Center, Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, 62nd & Broadway, and 34th Street Theatre.)



Opening Sept. 27, Nick Broomfield's documentary "Biggie & Tupac."

MICHAEL WELDON

THE HEIRESS

This 1949 William Wyler production is one of the best film adaptations of Henry James, along with "The Innocents." The screenplay, by Ruth and Augustus Goetz, is based on their stage version of James's "Washington Square," and at first the period settings and clothes make the movie seem a little heavy and stagy, but then Wyler's mastery of the psychological nuances can have you drawing deep breaths. It's a peerless, super-controlled movie, in the same mode as Wyler's 1952 "Carrie," though more fully sustained. Wyler's greatness here is that he can hold the elements of the film in his palm without constricting the actors. He frees them. Montgomery Clift is just about perfect as James's fortune hunter Morris Townsend, and Olivia de Havilland does her finest work ever as the heiress Catherine Sloper. With Ralph Richardson, Miriam Hopkins, Vanessa Brown, Betty Linley, Ray Collins, Selena Royle, and Mona Freeman. Music by Aaron Copland.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; Sept. 27-28.)

IGBY GOES DOWN

A drama that treads deep into the heart of Salinger country: Kieran Culkin is Igby, late of military school, now sulking in Manhattan and running amok with his mother's credit card. Burr Steers, in his début as a writer-director, seems to remember only Holden Caulfield's alienation, and none of the self-scrutiny—the sense that rebellion is a pose like any other—which makes that novel more than just a kiss-off. The movie has a cold and sour take on the rich and feckless, and the decision to open the film with Igby and his brother (Ryan Phillippe) euthanizing their mother (Susan Sarandon) doesn't exactly leave a lot of room to maneuver. There are a few affecting scenes with Igby's mentally unstable father (Bill Pullman), but none of the nuanced emotional progression that the story needs to have genuine impact. With Claire Danes as a Bennington poetess and Amanda Peet as a SoHo mistress.—*M.A.* (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

IN PRAISE OF LOVE

The new film from Jean-Luc Godard is carved into two halves. The first is in gliding, rapturous monochrome, the second in angry color, all the more jagged for being shot on digital video. From that contrast springs the whole endeavor. Godard is caught, as so often, between elegy and protest—between a lament for certain ideals, private and political, and splenetic digs at prevailing cultural conditions. There is a story—we follow a dour sort called Edgar (Bruno Putzulu), who is himself trying to cast a movie on the subject of changing love—

but the narrative is so diluted that you can't help sensing Godard's indifference to the fates of his characters. Instead, his passion seems to be given over to chastising Hollywood for its abuse of history; America at large also takes a beating, apparently on the ground that the place is not old enough. (What exactly is any country supposed to do about that?) Yet the work, like most of Godard, asks to be seen; its strains of regret tug at you, and hang around in the mind, with a persistence rare in more coherent pictures. In French.—*A.L.* (*9/2/02*) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

MY BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING

This small, inexpensively made independent movie has become a commercial phenomenon, drawing out homebound older moviegoers who had largely been resigned to watching sitcoms. The trouble is, the movie is not all that different from a sitcom. Nia Vardalos, who developed the material from her own experience, is Toula, a thirty-year-old unmarried "seating hostess" at a restaurant run by her Greek-American family in Chicago. The family considers Toula a disgrace and pursues her like the Furies, hounding her with lousy advice and overloaded plates of lamb and baklava. When a blandly handsome Wasp named Ian (John Corbett) enters the scene and begins dating Toula, the family goes haywire. The director, Joel Zwick, has a gentle touch: some of the behavior onscreen may be crass, but the movie itself isn't crassly made. The conventionality of it all is depressing, though. With Michael Constantine as the self-pitying, tyrannical head of the family, Lainie Kazan as Toula's mother, and the expert needle-nosed farceur Andrea Martin as one of the lamb-bearing aunts.—*D.D.* (*9/23/02*) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

ONE HOUR PHOTO

Robin Williams in serious mode, playing a nowhere man—Sy Parrish, the photo guy at the mall, who wears wire-frame glasses, a white shirt, and a tie clip that we're meant to take as a kind of emotional chastity belt. Sy becomes unhealthily obsessed with a young and beautiful suburban family—wayward father (Michael Vartan), good mom (Connie Nielsen), and adorable young son (Dylan Smith)—and plasters his wall at home with extra prints of their family snaps. Mark Romanek's psychological thriller features sterile white environments and lots of shots in which Williams is grimly isolated in sinister, hospital-like sets. The movie's experimental tone, however, doesn't disguise a rather low-grade and unpleasant form of suspense. Romanek is caught between making Sy dangerous and making him sympathetic, but any terror or pity we might feel gets crimped by the film's queasy narrative logic, which keeps us in the dark about Sy's nature right down to the unsatisfactory final scene.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

PRINCESS MONONOKE

A gorgeous animated epic: one of the few original screen fantasies with a thrilling density and splendor comparable to the best of Tolkien. Hayao Miyazaki sets this 1997 feature in an antique Japan where nature is in turmoil: firearms have made humans as powerful as gods, and industry has just begun to devour the primordial forest. At the start, the snakelike tentacles of a gigantic demon boar infect the prince of an isolated tribe with a wound that will grow and kill him—unless he can discover the poison's source. His journey lands him in the middle of a fight between forest spirits and an arrogant noblewoman who runs an ironworks manned by former prostitutes. Princess Mononoke, the adopted human daughter of a wolf goddess, becomes a reluctant ally of the prince, but there's nothing predictable about the romantic outcome or anything else in this movie. Miyazaki puts you at the molten core—the screen seems alive with a liquid fire—of a chaotic universe as it struggles for balance.—*Michael Sragow* (Sunshine Cinema; Sept. 27-28.)

THE SACRIFICE

Andrei Tarkovsky's hundred-and-forty-five-minute parable about humanity's fate stars Erland Josephson as Alexander, a former actor whose actions may determine the planet's destiny during a nuclear cataclysm. As a small group of friends, servants, and family gathers to celebrate Alexander's birthday (which turns out to coincide with doomsday), bits of suppressed emotion are made suddenly vivid the way they are in Ingmar Bergman movies. But most of the time Tarkovsky operates like a guru with Biblical retribution up his sleeve, exploiting the elegant isolation of Alexander's waterfront estate first for lulling, then for apocalyptic pictorial and aural effects. The movie lacks the cohesiveness and charge of genuine nightmare; Tarkovsky's jeremiads against the materialism, violence, and aimlessness of modern civilization turn into white noise. The real dreamer here is the cinematographer, Sven Nykvist, who catches moonbeams with his lens and provides an illusion, at least, of clarity. Originally released in 1986. In Swedish.—*M.S.* (Walter Reade Theatre; Sept. 26-27.)

SECRETARY

A comic porno-fantasy shot by the director Steven Shainberg in a slow, dreamy, neo-De Palma style with a candy-colored palette. Maggie Gyllenhaal is a masochistic girl who finds happiness working for a creepy lawyer (James Spader) who regularly whacks her on the fanny. Gyllenhaal has a Kewpie-doll silliness that almost makes the naughty parts of the movie fun, but Shainberg takes forever to get the story going and lacks the stylistic panache to pull off his pain-is-liberation premise. The movie is a piece of brazen anti-feminism that says, "If pain is your thing, you go, girl!"—*D.D.* (*9/23/02*) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

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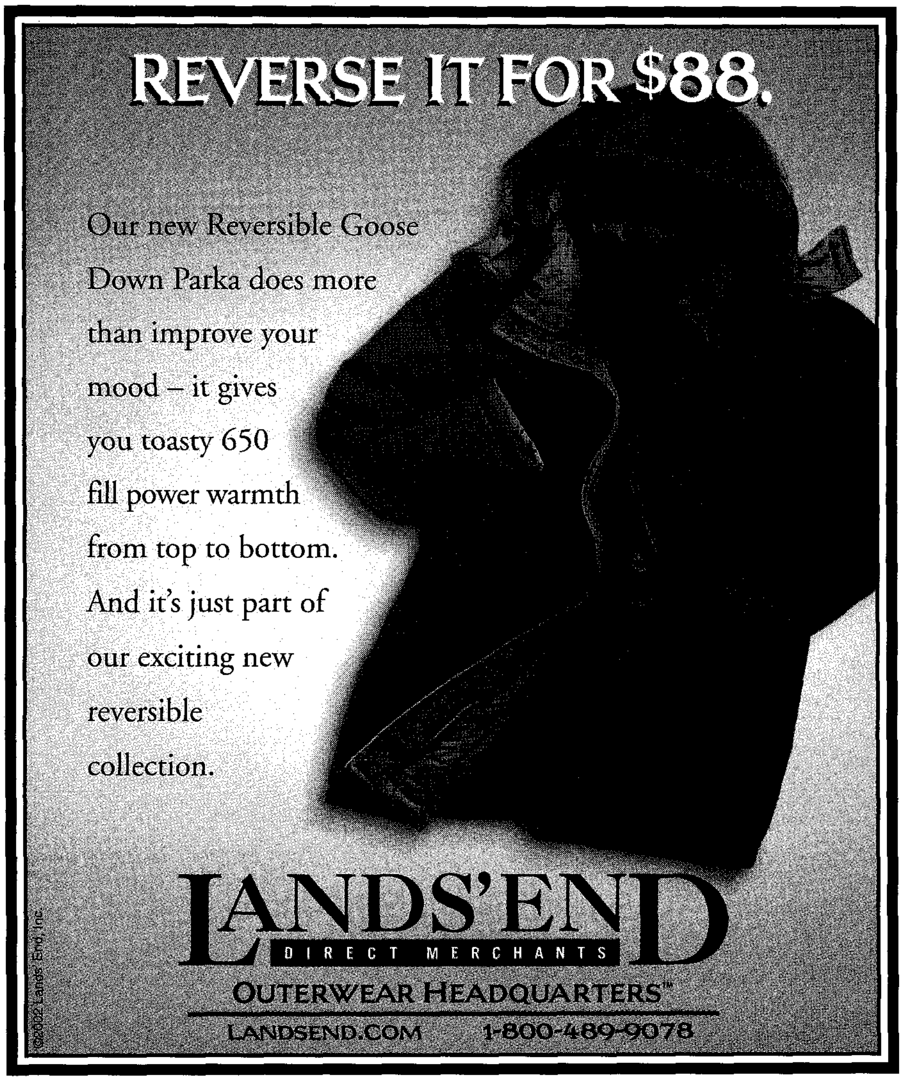

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SWIMMING
Lauren Ambrose (the exceptional young actress from "Six Feet Under") plays a colorless waitress in a seaside resort who gradually awakens to her own vibrant attractiveness in an ugly-duckling story directed by Robert J. Siegel. (A film professor, he co-wrote the script with one of his students.) The movie has a nice feel; it's never pushy or preachy about female adolescence. The balanced, leisurely pace of the plot, which unfolds over a summer, is like a stroll on the beach, with giddy scenes of hormonal high spirits interwoven with quieter moments of friendship and loyalty.—*B.D.* (Union Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE LAST KISS (8/5/02)
Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.
MOSTLY MARTHA
Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, and Paris.
THE PINOCHET CASE
Film Forum.
SPIRITED AWAY
Sunshine Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9835).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Sept. 29: "Master Class: The Art of Cinematography." Sept. 28 at 2: "The Day of the Lo-

cust" (1975, John Schlesinger), followed by a conversation with the cinematographer Conrad Hall. ♦ The remaining films will be introduced by Hall. Sept. 28-29 at 7: "In Cold Blood" (1967, Richard Brooks). ♦ Sept. 29 at 2: "Fat City" (1972, John Huston). ♦ Sept. 29 at 4:15: "Searching for Bobby Fischer" (1993, Steven Zaillian).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Sept. 25-26 and Sept. 28-29: A restored print of Conrad Rooks's "Siddhartha" (1972).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—The American cinema of Fritz Lang. Sept. 25 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Man Hunt" (1941). ♦ Sept. 30-Oct. 1 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Big Heat" (1953). ♦ A Jacques Becker retrospective. All films are in French. Sept. 26 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Rue de l'Estrapade" (1953). ♦ Sept. 27 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Montparnasse 19" (1958). ♦ Sept. 28-29 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Goupi Mains Rouges" (1943).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Oct. 10: A William Wyler retrospective. Sept. 25-26 at 1:05, 4:20, and 7:40: "The Westerner" (1940). ♦ Sept. 25-26 at 3, 6:15, and 9:30: "Hell's Heroes" (1930). ♦ Sept. 27-28 at 1, 5:20, and 9:40: "The Heiress" (†). ♦ Sept. 27-28 at 3:10 and 7:30: "Carrie" (1952). ♦ Sept. 29 at 1:30 and 7:10 and Sept. 30 at 2:30: "Ben-Hur" (1959). ♦ Sept. 30 at 6:30 and 9:30: "A House Divided" (1931). ♦ Sept. 30 at 7:55: "Tom Brown of Culver" (1932). ♦ Oct. 1 at 3:15 and 7:05: "These Three" (1936). ♦ Oct. 1 at 1:20, 5:10, and 9: "Come and Get It" (1936).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Through Dec. 17: Neo-noir films. Oct. 1 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Thieves" (1997, André Téchiné; in French).

THE NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL

Lincoln Center (875-5050)—Sept. 27-Oct. 13: Seventeen days of new films. Sept. 27 at 7:45: "About Schmidt" (2002, Alexander Payne). ♦ Sept. 28 at noon and Sept. 29 at 6:45: "The Son" (2002, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne; in French). ♦ Sept. 28 at 3: "Russian Ark" (2002, Alexander Sokurov; in Russian). ♦ Sept. 28 at 6 and Sept. 30 at 9: "Chihwaseon" (2002, Im Kwon-Taek; in Korean). ♦ Sept. 28 at 9 and Sept. 29 at 1:30: "The Magdalene Sisters" (2002, Peter Mullan). ♦ Sept. 29 at 4:15 and Oct. 1 at 6: "Ten" (2002, Abbas Kiarostami; in Farsi). ♦ Sept. 29 at 9:30 and Sept. 30 at 6: "Unknown Pleasures" (2002, Jia Zhang Ke; in Mandarin). ♦ Oct. 1 at 8:30: "The Uncertainty Principle" (2002, Manoel de Oliveira; in Portuguese.)

SCANDINAVIA HOUSE

58 Park Ave. (847-9746)—The films of Jan Troell. Sept. 25 at 6:30: "As White as in Snow" (2001; in Swedish). ♦ Sept. 27 at 6:30: "The Emigrants" (1970; in Swedish).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

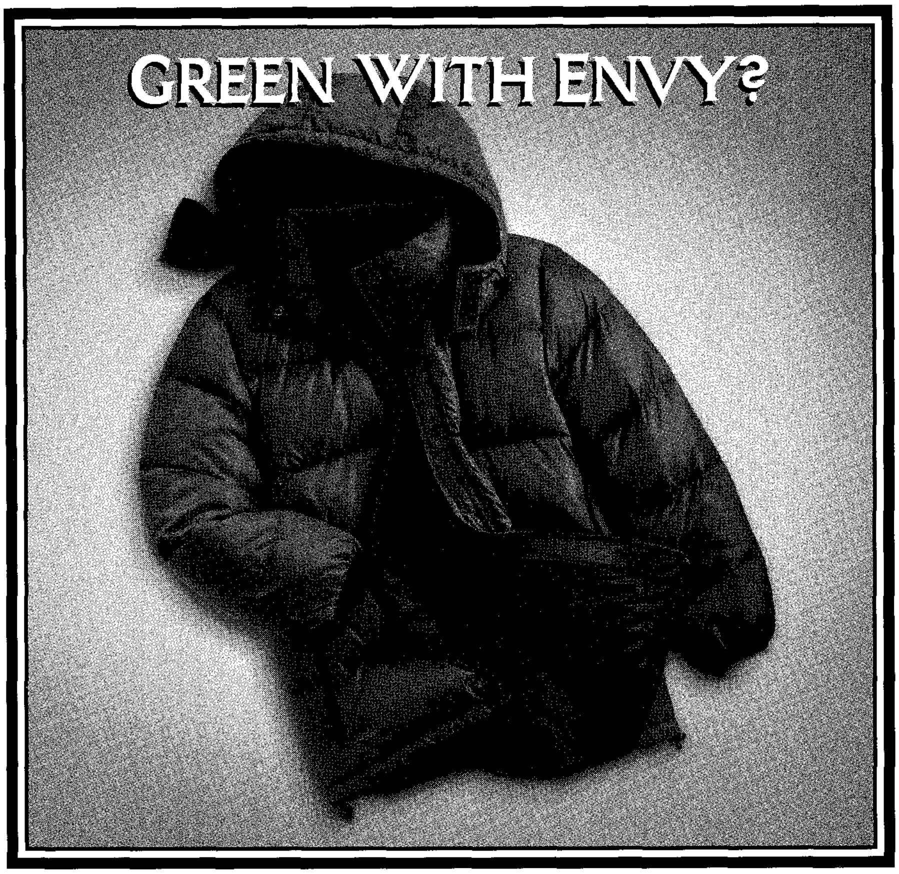
139-143 E. Houston St. (358-0573)—Midnight movies. Sept. 27-28: "Princess Mononoke" (†).

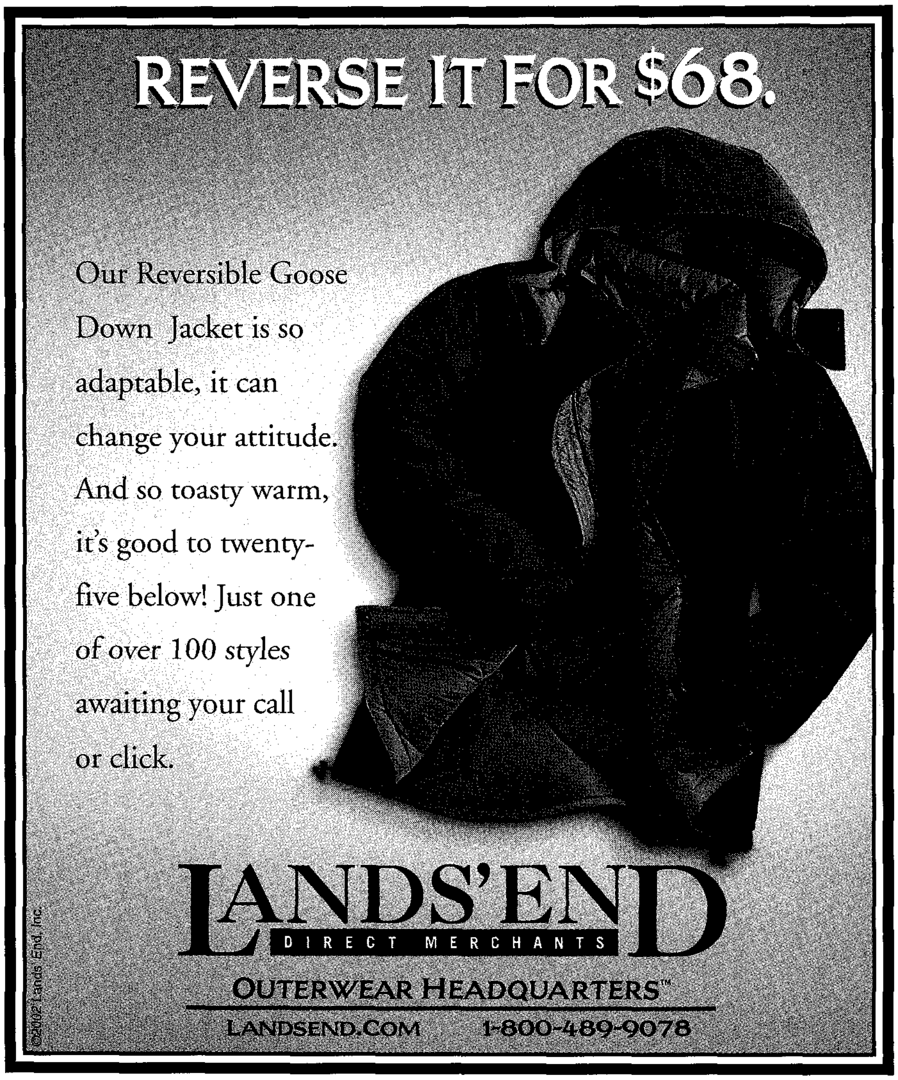
THALIA THEATRE

2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—Sept. 28 at 2 and 7: "The Bride Wore Black" (1968, François Truffaut; in French). ♦ Sept. 28 at 4 and 9: "Mildred Pierce" (1945, Michael Curtiz). ♦ Sept. 29 at 1 and 6:30: "The Manchurian Candidate" (1962, John Frankenheimer). ♦ Sept. 29 at 3:15 and 8:45: "Chinatown" (1974, Roman Polanski).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Sept. 27: "Tarkovsky at 70." Sept. 25 at 6:30 and 9: "Nostalgia" (1983; in Russian and Italian). ♦ Sept. 26 at 7 and Sept. 27 at 4 and 7: "The Sacrifice" (†). ♦ Through Oct. 10: "The Actor as Activist: Celebrating Shabana Azmi." Unless otherwise noted, all films are in Hindi. Sept. 28 at 1 and 7 and Sept. 30 at 6:30: "The Seedling" (1973, Shyam Benegal). ♦ Sept. 28 at 3:45 and Sept. 30 at 3:30 and 9:15: "Godmother" (1999, Vinay Shukla). ♦ Sept. 29 at 2: "Fire" (1996, Deepa Mehta; in English and Hindi). ♦ Sept. 29 at 4:30: "Death Sentence" (1997, Prakash Jha). ♦ Sept. 29 at 8:15: "The Ruins" (1983, Mrinal Sen). ♦ Oct. 1 at 4 and 9:15: "Kamla" (1985, Jagmohan Mundhra). ♦ Oct. 1 at 6:30: "Sati" (1989, Aparna Sen).





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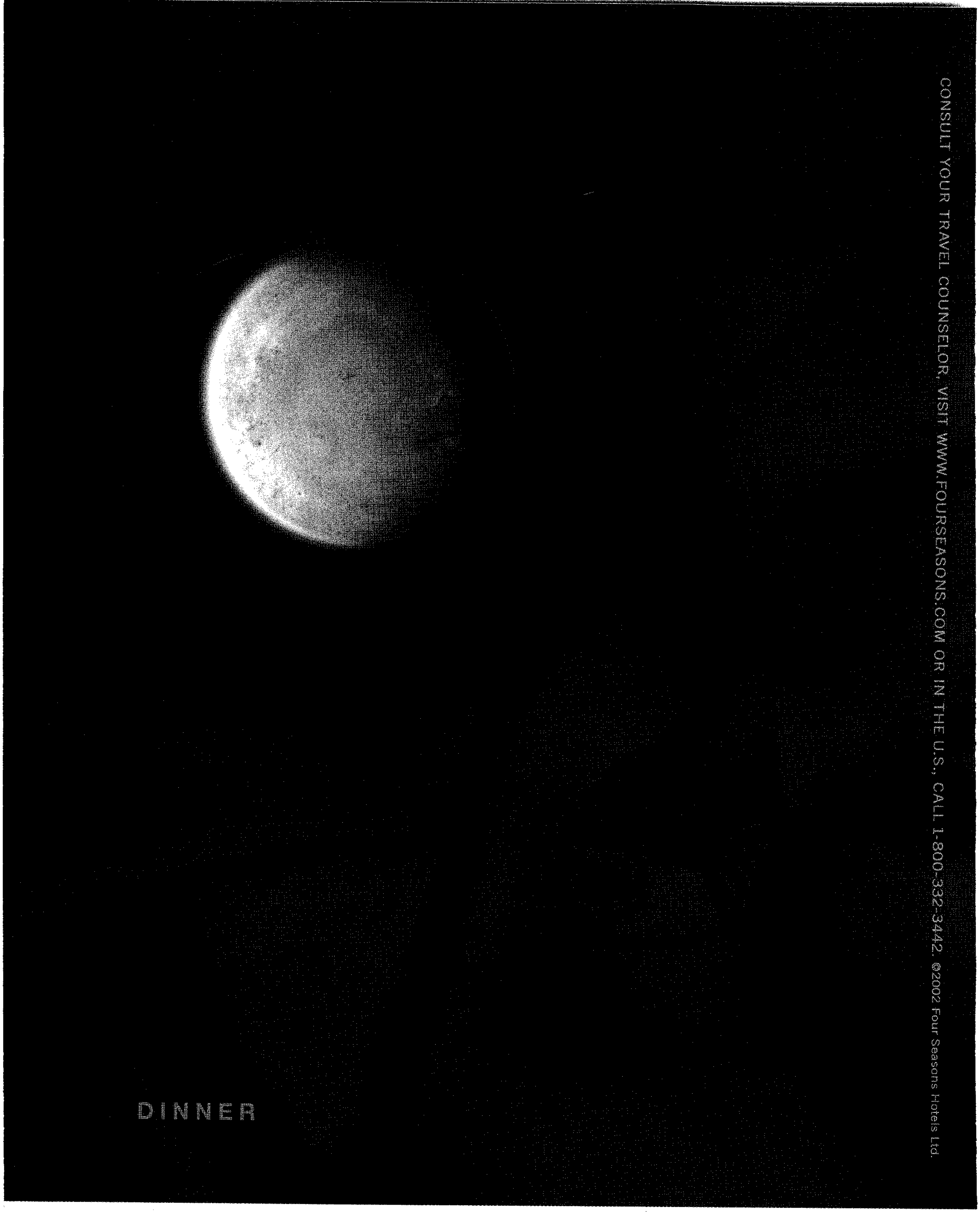

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THE NEW YORKER

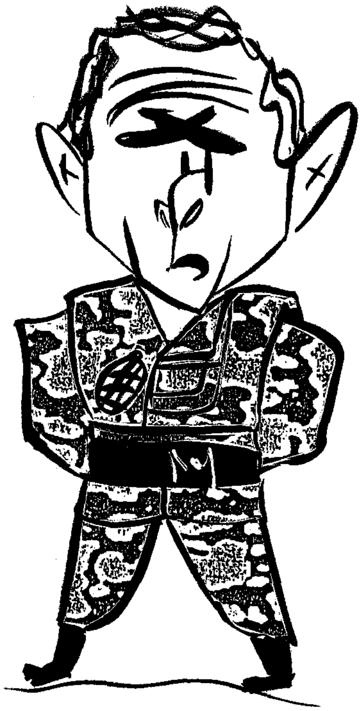
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
DECLARATIONS

Last Tuesday was Constitution Day, the anniversary of the wrap party of the original Constitutional Convention, when the thirty-nine delegates still in Philadelphia, before saddling up to disperse to their homes up and down the Eastern Seaboard, got together one last time to sign the document they had just spent four months hashing out. Constitution Day, like Flag Day and Armed Forces Day, is one of those would-be holidays that never quite achieved escape velocity. It's just another day at the office. But Joyce Appleby, a busy and eminent professor emerita of American history at U.C.L.A., took it off anyway. She spent it in Washington, where she presented members of Congress with a petition, signed by nearly thirteen hundred of her professional colleagues. "We, the undersigned American historians, urge our members of Congress to assume their Constitutional responsibility to debate and vote on whether or not to declare war on Iraq," the petition began. "We ask our senators and representatives to do this because Congress has not asserted its authority to declare war for over half a century, leaving the president solely in control of war powers to the detriment of our democracy and in clear violation of the Constitution."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Just how many wars the United States has fought since that first Constitution Day, ten score and fifteen years ago, is a hard number to pin down. How does a couple of hundred sound? There have been eight or nine that were big enough so that most reasonably attentive college students could probably name them, from the War of 1812 to the Persian Gulf War. There have been a dozen other conflicts that involved the accoutrements of big-time warfare, such as pitched battles or naval engagements. And if you count the many so-called Indian wars, the various Latin-American adventures, and all the military episodes that, to their participants at least, felt an awful lot like war (from the forays against the Barbary-pirate states of North Africa at the outset of the nineteenth century, to the Balkan interventions at the close of the twentieth), the numbers begin to mount up.



Formal declarations of war, however, are as rare as the thing itself is common. There have been only five: for the War of 1812, the Mexican War (1846), the Spanish-American War (1898), and the two World Wars. The idea that there was once a time when American soldiers never went into battle without a declaration of war is an Edenic fantasy—an exercise in nostalgia for a past that never was, like the idea that the government used to belong to "the people" and now serves "the special interests." Anyway, a formal declaration is hardly a necessary condition for a war to be, so to speak, constitutional. Our bloodiest undeclared war was not Vietnam; it was the Civil War, which killed more Americans than all the nation's wars put together except the Second World War, and which the national imagination has sacralized. In 1861, the government of the United States viewed itself as suppressing a lawless rebellion, not as fighting the armies of a sovereign state. For Congress to have declared war on the Confederacy would have been to bestow upon the Slave Power a kind of backhanded diplomatic recognition. (The same difficulty would attend a declaration of war on Al Qaeda and, more broadly, bedevils the whole metaphor of the "war on terrorism": it affords the enemy a

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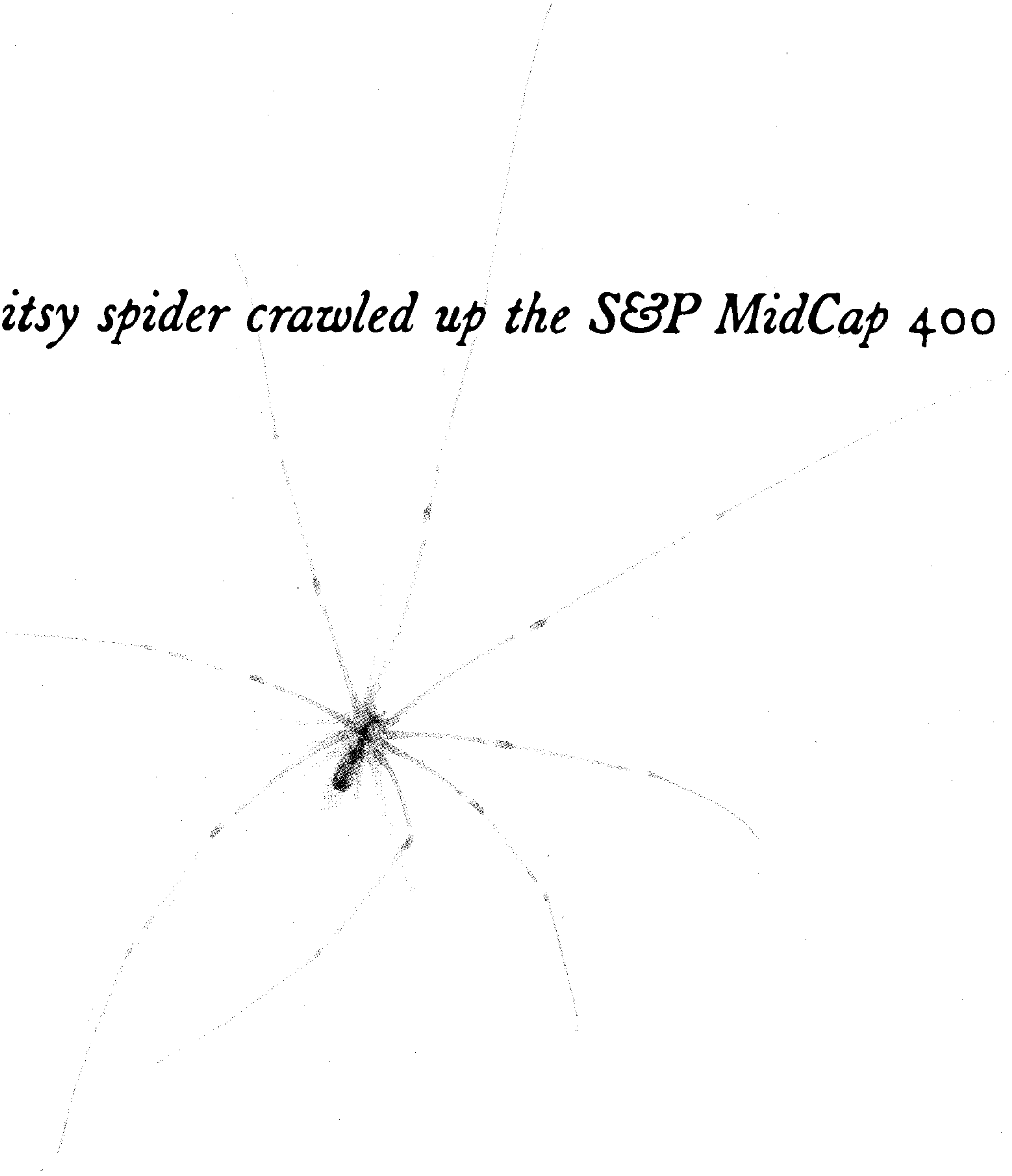

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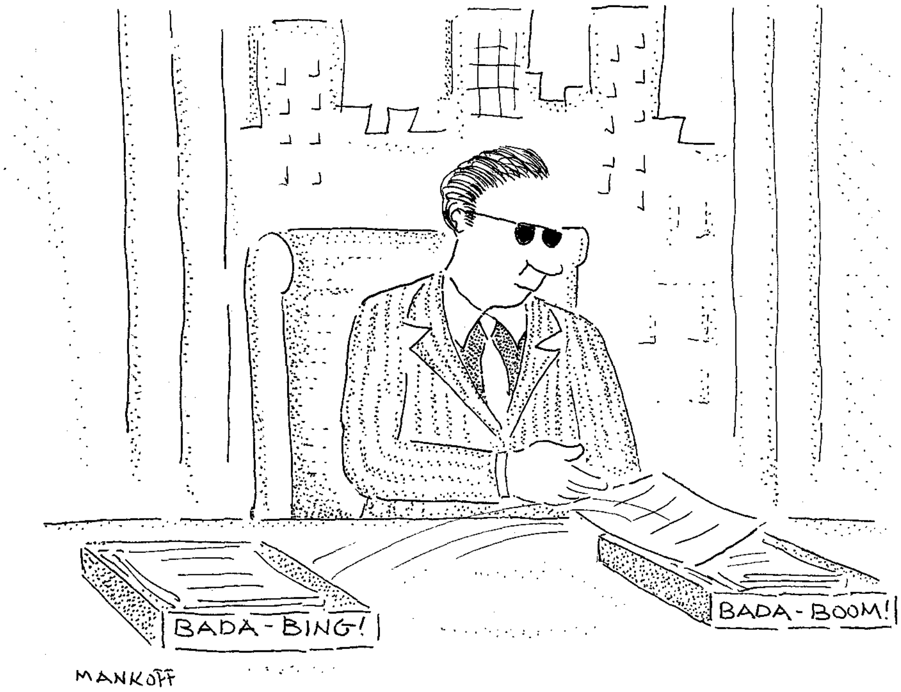
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• •

status and dignity he doesn't deserve.)

Still, the fact that it has been a record sixty-one years since Congress formally declared war has to mean something, and it obviously doesn't mean that the nation has beat its swords into plowshares. Nor is the omission purely a product of Presidential usurpation. During the first half of the twentieth century, declared war came to mean world war, total war, war to the finish—exactly what everyone on earth most feared throughout the West's long, tense standoff with nuclear-girded Soviet totalitarianism. Psychologically, declaring war (in Korea or Vietnam, for example) would have felt like tempting the most terrible of fates. And, while the wars of the past half century were invariably undertaken at Presidential initiative, it is not quite true that they were fought without congressional authorization. Congress, on August 7, 1964, gave its approval to combat in Vietnam via the Gulf of Tonkin resolution. The trouble with that resolution was less that it failed to meet strict constitutional standards than that it was based upon reports of alleged acts of North Vietnamese aggression so exaggerated as to amount to lies. The War Powers Resolution, passed in 1973 in the wake of the Vietnam nightmare, was an attempt to right a perceived imbalance. Every President since then has dismissed it as unconstitutional, and every President has more or less abided by it.

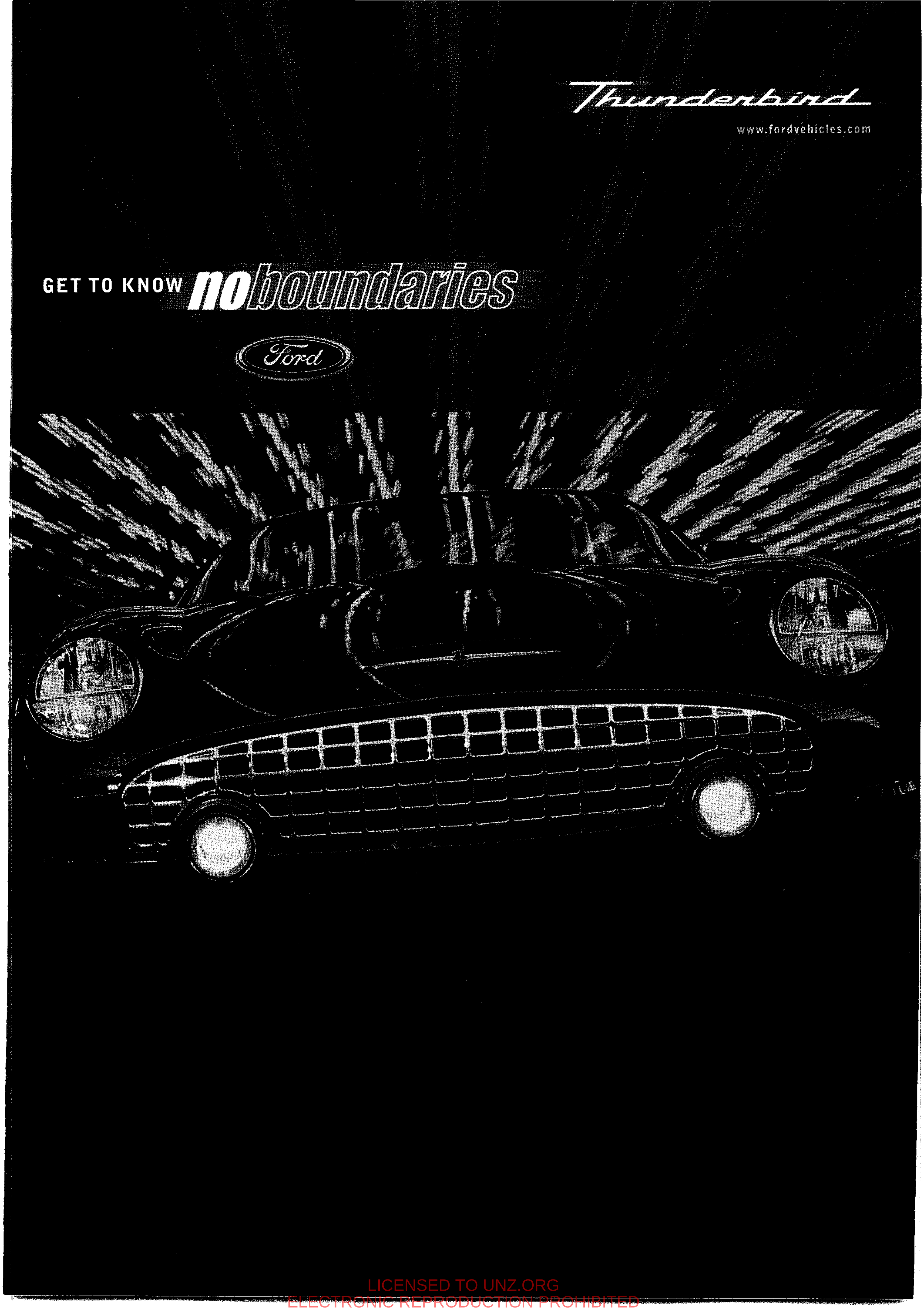
The signers of the historians' petition no doubt include some for whom the constitutional issue is a screen for a reflexive rejection of any use of American military power. But the list also includes the names of some of the most distinguished explorers of the American past, including Alan Brinkley, Henry F. Graff, Gerda Lerner, James M. McPherson, Jack N. Rakove, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Gaddis Smith, and Sean Wilentz. They presumably understood that a formal declaration of war is out of the question. What they were actually seeking—and what is actually required, constitutionally and politically—is a vote on a resolution authorizing the use of force and specifying the conditions for that use. While the historians' petition was being circulated, the Bush Administration was still maintaining that it had the right to make premeditated, preëmptive, open-ended war on a large scale without so much as a wink from Congress (let alone from the United Nations). By the time the petition was presented, however, the historians' point had been carried; and, on Thursday, the White House sent a "discussion draft" resolution to Capitol Hill.

That Congress will pass some such resolution, and soon, is a foregone conclusion. But the text of the resolution is not, and the text matters. The task of the resolution-writers in Congress mirrors that of those at the U.N., where a similar exercise is under way. At the U.N., the focus is on Saddam Hussein. There, any new Security Council resolution had better make it unmistakably clear that the evasions and the defiance of the past decade will no longer be tolerated, that "unconditional inspections" must be absolutely and non-negotiably unconditional, and that the alternative to full coöperation is war. On Capitol Hill, the focus is on George W. Bush. The White House text is the blankest of blank checks: it simply rehearses the case against Saddam and authorizes the President to do whatever he wishes, not only in Iraq but throughout "the region." That won't do. Congress has the opportunity to steer the President toward a goal that makes sense. "Regime change" in Iraq is not that goal. Bush has occasionally said that regime change is his "policy." And it is certainly something to be desired. But he did not demand it in his speech to the General Assembly, and unless he is willing to drop it under the right conditions then his speech was given in the worst of bad faith. Ultimately, regime change makes sense only as a last resort—as a means, after all else has failed, to the end of eliminating an Iraqi threat of weapons, especially nuclear weapons, of mass destruction. That should be America's goal, and the world's. Congress now has a chance to keep open the possibility, however slim, that war can be avoided. If it does that, then truly it will have something to declare.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

DEPT. OF DERIVATION
SILENCE IS BEHOLDEN

Mike Batt is Britain's premier impresario of crossover classical music, having orchestrated the careers of such stars as Vanessa-Mae (a sexy Thai-Chinese violinist), Bond (a sexy four-piece multiethnic classical group), and the Planets (a sexy eight-piece multiethnic classical group). But many people still think of him as the musical muscle behind "The Wombles," a mid-seventies television series that featured a group of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fuzzy, singing creatures who picked up trash from city streets, put it into "tidy bags," and reused it in creative ways. It is perhaps fitting, then, that Batt recently did some recycling himself, though with results that were far from tidy.

On the Planets' début album, "Classical Graffiti," which was released this year in England and will reach American stores early in 2003, Batt needed a way to set off the CD's twelve proper tracks from four remixes. He introduced a one-minute silence as a divider, titled it "A One Minute Silence," in homage to one of the most famous modernist works of the twentieth century—John Cage's "4' 33"," an entirely silent piece, composed in 1952—and credited the track to "Batt/Cage." "But not John Cage," he said the other day. "This was someone named Clint Cage that I registered as a pseudonym."

Everything was going according to plan. The Planets, like Bond and Vanessa-Mae before them, were a resounding commercial success. "Then one day, after the record had been on the charts for two months, I was sitting with my mother on our patio," Batt said. "My secretary brought in a letter from the Mechanical-Copyright Protection Society, or the M.C.P.S., whose job it is to collect and forward royalties. It informed me that my silence was a copyright infringement on Cage's silence." The letter went on to say that an initial payment of more than four hundred pounds had been made to Peters Edition, the music-publishing company that administers the Cage catalogue. (Cage died in 1992.)

Batt, whose high-profile projects have been widely pilloried by classical-music critics, has learned how to respond to such developments. "I roared with laughter," he said. But the letter wasn't a joke. "We have to protect Cage and his ideas," Nicholas Riddle, the managing director of Peters Edition, said. "Otherwise, what's the use of having a publisher?" And though the initial royalties seemed trivial, the potential cost to Batt was significant. "The Planets are very successful," Batt said, "and the final amount could be tens of thousands of pounds, or more. It turns out it was worth fighting for."

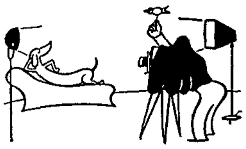
In a decision that would have delighted Cage, the two parties agreed to meet and play their respective silences in front of an audience. This summer, in a rented London recital hall, Batt conducted the Planets in a performance of "A One Minute Silence." Then Riddle introduced a version of "4' 33" " played by a young clarinettist. "The Cage piece was first performed on a piano—the piano lid was raised and lowered to signify movements—but the clarinettist did a fine job, playing with a kind of theatrical gravity," Batt said.

Afterward, Batt and Riddle debated the legal intricacies. The tone was gentlemanly but firm. "This is intellectual property that needs protecting," Riddle said. "I can see Mike's side, but I think he should see our side more clearly. He is a creative artist—he has a vested interest in a system that protects creative work—so in some ways he's sawing at the legs of the very stool he's sitting on." Riddle added that whenever "4' 33" " was recorded by other artists, as it had been in 1993, by Frank Zappa, for a Cage tribute album, full royalties were paid.

Though the M.C.P.S. has, for the moment, stopped making payments to Peters Edition, neither side will be silenced. Batt, who is releasing "A One Minute Silence" as a British single this week, has tweaked the Cage people further by registering hundreds of other silent compositions, ranging in length from one second to ten minutes. "I couldn't get four minutes and thirty-three seconds, obviously, but I got everything else," he said. He is proudest of two of his registered copyrights: four minutes and thirty-two seconds and four minutes and thirty-four seconds. "If there's ever a Cage performance where they come in a second shorter or longer, then it's mine," he said.

—Ben Greenman

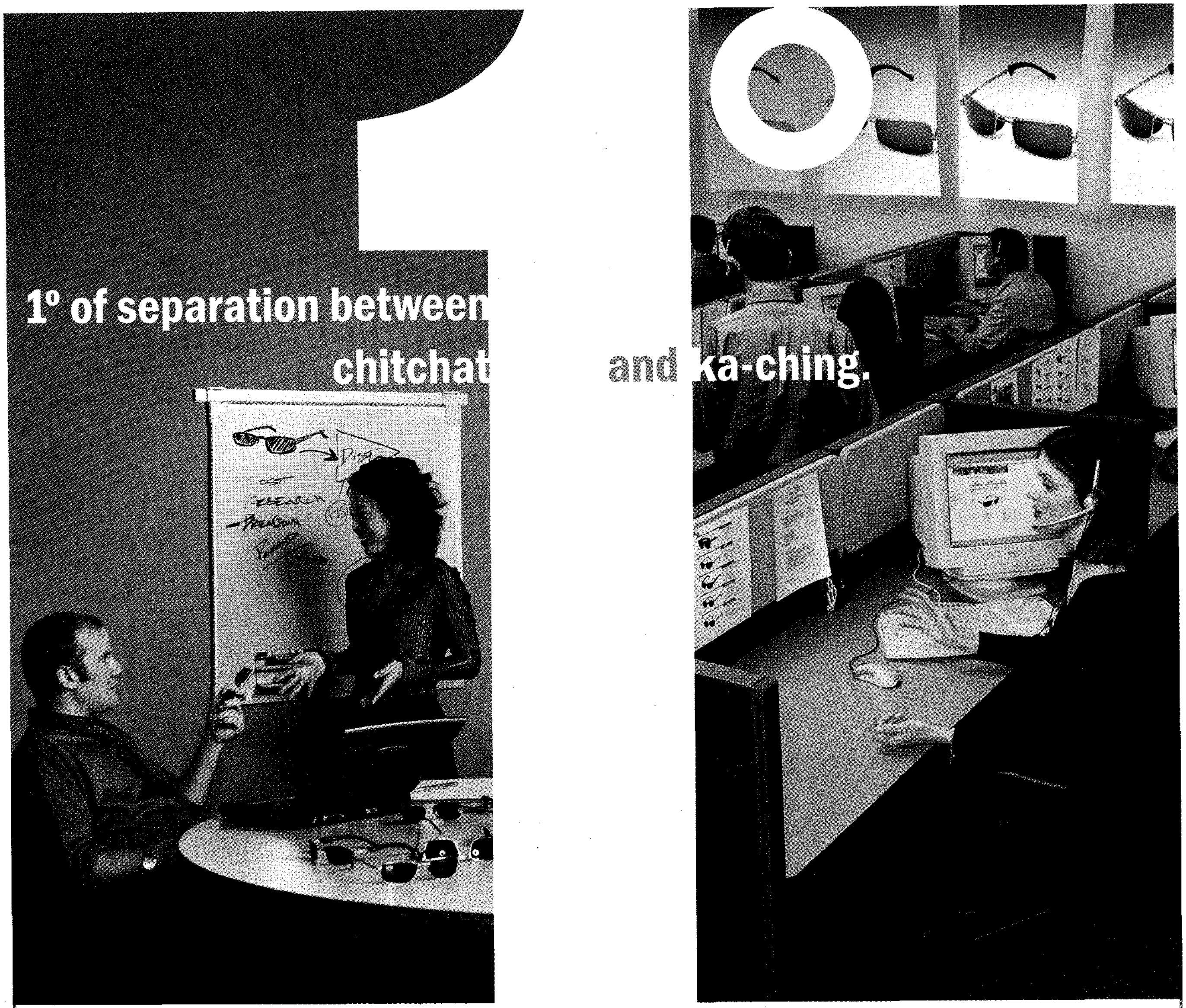
MAN AND BEAST DEPT.
CRITTER FLICKS



There are two species of Emmy winners that can be sighted at this time of year: the prime-time Emmy winners, who were all dressed up for the live award broadcast from L.A. last weekend, and the news and documentary Emmy winners, who, a couple of weeks earlier, were at the Marriott Marquis in Times Square. The latter group gets less "Entertainment Tonight"-type attention, given its less fabulous plumage, and Mark Lewis—tall, dark-haired, relatively mild-mannered—is a fine specimen, having won two Emmys this year for directing and producing the documentary "The Natural History of the Chicken." "Chicken" is the fifth in his series of excellent, funny, and very non-prime-time documentaries that end up being less about animals than about humans. The other films are "Cane Toads," "The Wonderful World of Dogs," "Animalicious," and "Rat," which won an Emmy in 1998.

Chicken with Emmy

The morning after the Marriott Marquis Emmys, Lewis put on jeans and a white shirt and wandered over to the Central Park Zoo. "A zoo is a wonderful place for animals to get a good look at humans," he said. "And you never know which side of the fence you're on." A native of Australia, Lewis lives in Hollywood with an adult female, two juvenile females, and a "pet," a cat. As Lewis approached the zoo's black-necked-swan exhibit, he began discussing his œuvre.



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His first film, "Cane Toads," in 1988, was about cane toads, which sugarcane farmers introduced in Queensland, Australia, in 1935, to combat a grayback-beetle infestation; they wound up with a cane-toad infestation instead. As is characteristic of Lewis's work, much of the film was shot from the toads' perspective, and stories of actual human-toad interactions were dramatically reënacted: a woman befriending numerous cane toads, people swerving their vehicles in order to kill cane toads, and a man smoking cane-toad venom, which can be deadly if ingested. "He compared it to something out of Carlos Castaneda," Lewis said.

"We have a cane toad," a zoo guide who was hovering nearby interjected.

"Really?" Lewis said. "How many?"

"Oh, I'm not sure," the guide said, adding, "You should see the penguins. Oh no, wait a second, they're molting right now."

Lewis gets his ideas from news clippings. He got started on "Chicken," for instance, after reading about a woman in Maine who had brought a chicken back to life through mouth-to-beak resuscitation. "For 'The Wonderful World of Dogs,'" he said, "I saw a story about how many tons of dog excrement are piled up in the streets of New York City every day, and it was an extraordinary amount." (Seventy-five tons, to be exact.) In "Dogs," which was shot in Sydney, Lewis recounts a woman's campaign to keep dogs off her lawn with thousands of shish-kebab skewers, with cayenne pepper (which she refers to as "canine pepper"), and, finally, with large plastic soda bottles partly filled with water, a dog-prevention technique that persists in Sydney to this day.

In 1999, Lewis made "Animalicious," which dramatized more animal-human encounters: a parrot that broke a man's neck; a hawk that stole a toupee; a turkey that shot a hunter; and a duck that died in flight and subsequently fell on a woman, who, it turned out, had been hit before by a pike that had fallen from the sky after being dropped by a heron. "All the networks had shows like 'When Good Pets Go Bad' and 'When Animals Attack,' and it was all so tacky because, you know, it wasn't like these were evil animals," Lewis said. "People were being stupid, and animals were being animals."

By now, Lewis had entered the penguin exhibit. It was cool and dark inside. The penguins were standing around, watching the people on the other side of the glass. Lewis took off his sunglasses and said, "This is quite good." Then he went outside and put his sunglasses back on and recalled his New York documentary, "Rat." To make the film, Lewis used what are known in the rat business as habituated rats—i.e., actor rats—which he smuggled in from Chicago. "Every single rat in 'Rat' was born in Chicago and trained in Chicago and flown in to New York by plane as a 'Rhodesian hamster,' " Lewis said. "I mean, you have a problem if you call them rats."

Just then, there was a ruckus among the humans over by the polar-bear exhibit. A polar bear had appeared. Lewis rushed over and said, "Oh!" in chorus with the other bear viewers, and then said, "He's quite big, isn't he?"

One of the good things about making "Rat" was that it enabled Lewis to spend

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THE COLLEGE OF MATTHEW PERRY

After completing rehab, Mr. Perry finished both his work on "Friends" for the season and his remaining scenes in "Serving Sara." Then, he says, he "went to the college of me," to focus on learning more about himself.—*The Times.*

The following are fall course offerings from the College of Matthew Perry, an institution of higher learning founded in 2002 for the study of the "Friends" star Matthew Perry.

Matthewmatics 1: An introduction to Matthewmatics, the study of numbers and numerical concepts relating to Matthew Perry. The course covers such concepts as positive numbers ($24 million for the 2002-03 season of "Friends"), negative numbers ($5.8 million opening-weekend box-office for "Serving Sara"), and "Lucky Numbers," the 2000 bomb featuring "Friends" co-star Lisa Kudrow but, fortunately for Matthew Perry, not Matthew Perry.

Advanced Lack of Chemistry 4a: This course will explore the utter absence of chemistry between Matthew Perry and the female co-star of every romantic comedy in which he has ever appeared, and why it was really the actress's fault and not Matthew Perry's. Students will explore whether Matthew Perry had less chemistry with Neve Campbell or with Elizabeth Hurley, and whether he should commit to one of the romantic-comedy screenplays currently on his nightstand, and take the opportunity to work with Mariah Carey or Dame Judi Dench.

Perrypsychology 5: An overview of Perrypsychology, the study of the mind, emotions, and thought processes of Matthew Perry. As students become familiar with the basic concepts of Perrypsychology, they will attempt to pinpoint what Matthew Perry was thinking when he chose to appear in the film "Serving Sara," in which he was called upon to massage the prostate of an impotent bull.

Comparative Matthew Perrys 100: This graduate history course compares the career of Matthew Perry with that of Commodore Matthew Perry (1794-1858), who established trade between the United States and Japan, with the Treaty of Kanagawa, in 1854. Students will learn that Commodore Matthew Perry is a less important historical figure than plain old Matthew Perry for a number of reasons: Commodore Perry never had a hit sitcom in the "must-see-TV" lineup, Commodore Perry never was nominated for an Emmy, and Commodore Perry never dated Julia Roberts briefly. Required text for this course: *People* cover story, September 9, 2002, "Matthew Perry: Happy, Healthy and Hot!"

(Note: admission to the College of Matthew Perry is highly selective, with enrollment for the 2002-03 academic year limited to just one student. For this reason, applicants are encouraged to apply to a safety school, such as the College of David Schwimmer.)

—*Andy Borowitz*

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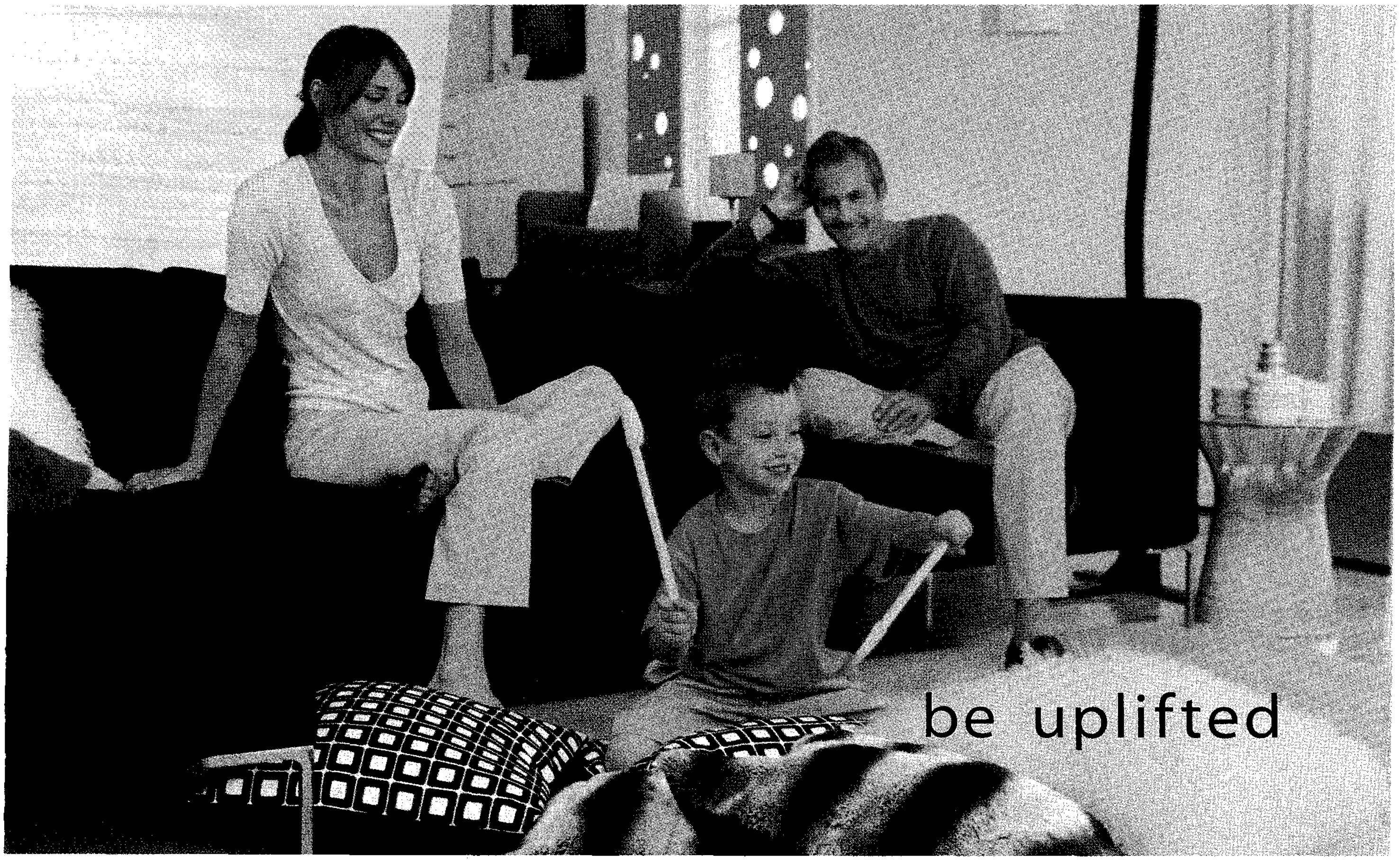

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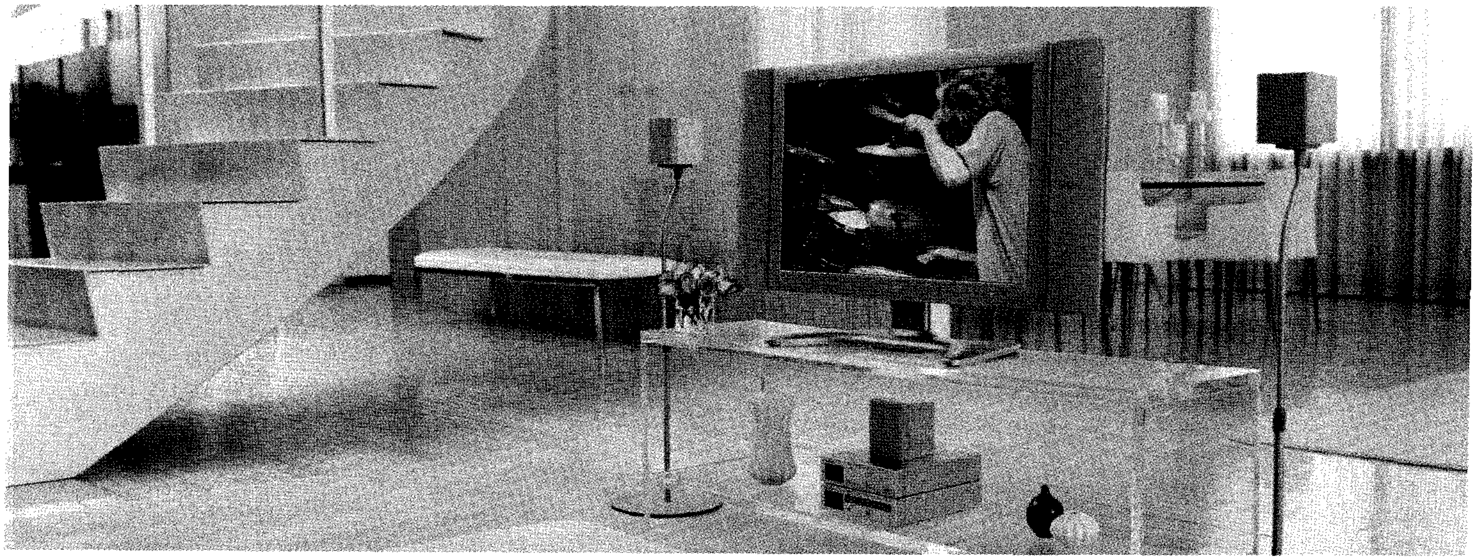

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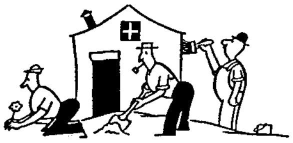
some time in New York. "I'm proud to say that my mother was from the Bronx," he said. She was a radio scriptwriter from Hunts Point who met his father while serving with the Red Cross in Papua New Guinea. "She had a devilish sense of humor, and she wanted her ashes spread through Bloomingdale's when she died. She said she'd bought a nice cashmere sweater there once. So my brother and I, we walked around the store spreading her ashes. It was like that scene with the dirt in 'The Great Escape.' "

After watching the polar bear for a while, Lewis walked out of the zoo and into Central Park. A big wind picked up. He braced himself and asked for directions to Strawberry Fields. "We ended up spreading my mum's ashes in several places," he said, "and there's a special tree near there that I always visit when I'm here."

—*Robert Sullivan*

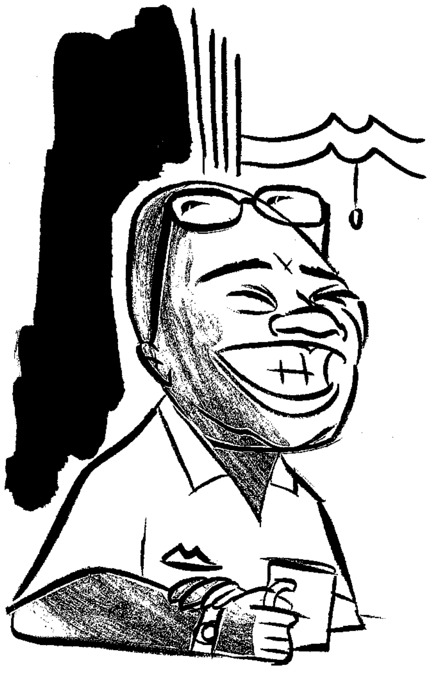
HALLOWED GROUND
SATCHMO WAS HERE



For nearly half his life, Louis Armstrong lived at 34-56 107th Street, in Corona, Queens. When Armstrong and his fourth wife, Lucille, bought the place, in 1943, it was a boxy two-story wooden house in a mostly white neighborhood; today, it is a boxy two-story brick-faced house in an area that is mostly Hispanic. On a recent afternoon, Michael Cogswell, the director of the Louis Armstrong House & Archives, was standing in front of the house, discussing plans for its future. He gestured toward the attached garage, which contained a ladder, an old door, and an assortment of unidentifiable junk. "This is the visitors' center," he said purposefully, if prematurely.

Sometime in the next year, the Armstrong house is scheduled to open to the public as the city's newest and perhaps most intimate museum. Visitors will be invited not just to tromp through the Armstrongs' kitchen (done from floor to ceiling in turquoise) and poke around their den (panelled in wood, with an early reel-to-reel tape machine) but to take in the bedroom (silver wallpaper with white lilies), and even the master bath. (Armstrong, a lifelong devotee of the laxative Swiss Kriss, had speakers installed in the bathroom so that he could have music piped in from the den.) In addition to the Armstrongs' furniture, in storage while the house undergoes a $1.6-million restoration, Cogswell is hoping to fill the rooms with everyday objects, like cereal boxes and perfume bottles, circa 1965. "The effect we want to give is that the Armstrongs just stepped out," he said, standing in the couple's walk-in closet (papered in what looks like crinkly aluminum foil).

The idea of turning the Armstrong house into a museum has been kicking around ever since Lucille died, in 1983. (Louis died in 1971.) First, though, someone had to go through the contents of the place, a surprisingly laborious task. In addition to being the most celebrated jazz musician of his generation—Dizzy Gillespie once called him "jazz in person"—Armstrong, it turns out, was a collage-maker, a prolific writer, a lover of memorabilia, a home-recording enthusiast, and a pack rat. "We literally have hundreds of hours of tape of Louis and the guys sitting around the dressing room swapping dirty jokes and band stories," Cogswell said. It took Cogswell, himself a former saxophone player, three years to catalogue the house's contents, which included six hundred and fifty reels of tape, five thousand photographs, eighty-five scrapbooks, a hundred and twenty gold records and awards, and five gold-plated trumpets, just to name the objects of significance, which are now in the Louis Armstrong Archives, at Queens College.



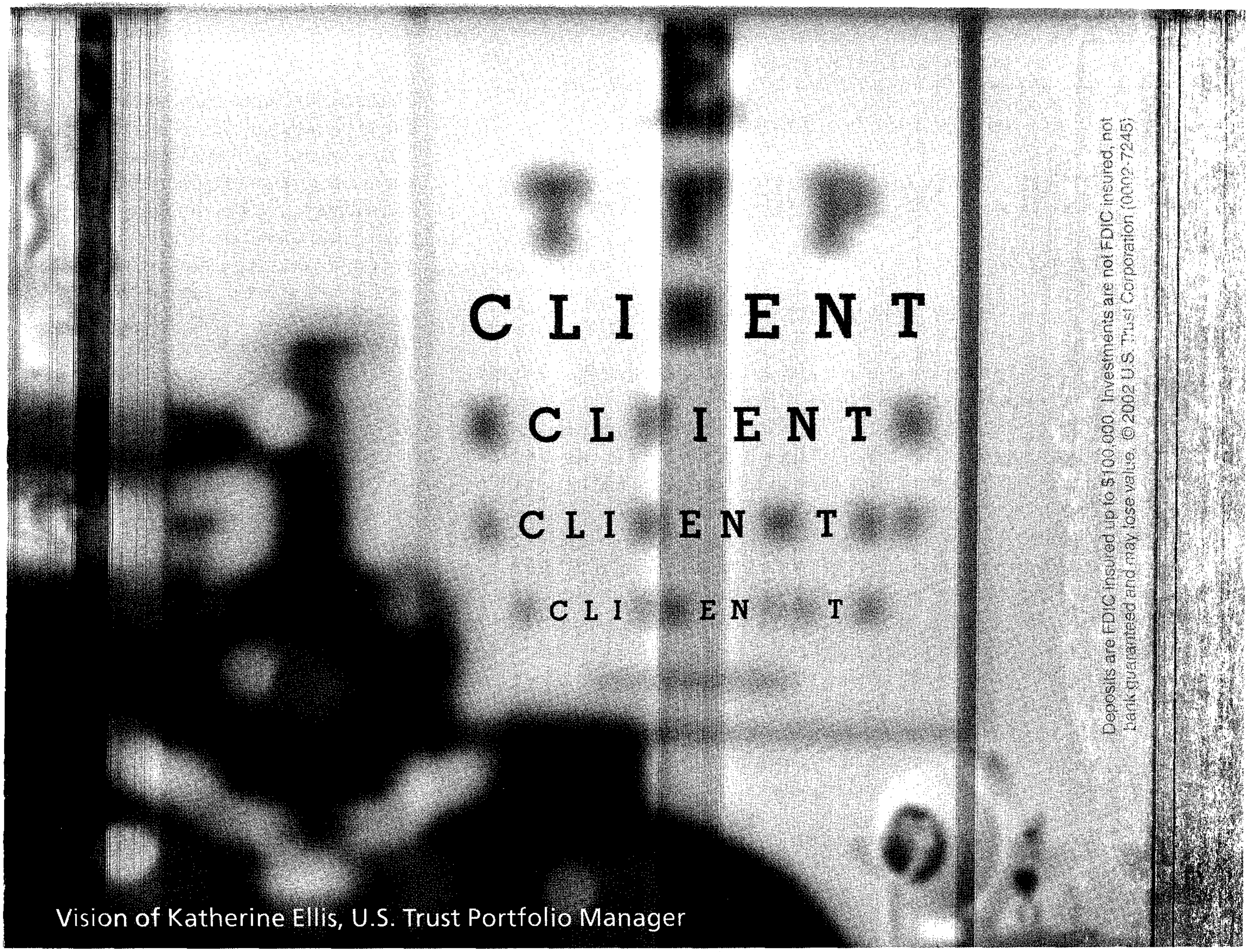
Louis Armstrong

Then, of course, there was the problem of money. Lucille left the house to the City of New York, intending it to be a memorial to her husband. The city clearly considered the museum a low priority, and, had Cogswell and other supporters not finally succeeded in getting funds for the restoration included in the city's capital budget just a few months before September 11th, chances are the project would still be on hold.

The other day, as Cogswell gave his house tour, one of the contractors was meeting with one of the project managers in the finished basement (done in shades of quince). In the yard, where the Armstrongs had had a wet bar constructed out of concrete, workers were digging up flagstones and carting around dirt. The garden bathroom, accessible from behind the bar, had just been discovered to have dry rot, and at one point Cogswell was called in to a cramped consultation around the toilet. "That's the thing about construction projects," he said. "You never know what you're going to find."

Perhaps the most striking thing about the house is how unassuming it is. By the nineteen-fifties and certainly by the sixties, the Armstrongs could have afforded to live just about anywhere in the world. They chose to remain in a not particularly spacious or even attractive house in a middle-class neighborhood, apparently because that was where Louis felt comfortable. (Lucille did once get him to go look at a town house in Manhattan, but, after being mobbed by autograph seekers, he got right back in his car and headed across the bridge.) The modesty of the place may not seem well suited to a museum, but, then again, maybe it is. As Cogswell put it, surveying the house from a tiny porch off Louis's den, "Here's one of the great geniuses of Western music, not only of the twentieth century but any century, and he lived like a regular guy, in Corona, Queens."

—*Elizabeth Kolbert*



Vision of Katherine Ellis, U.S. Trust Portfolio Manager

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ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

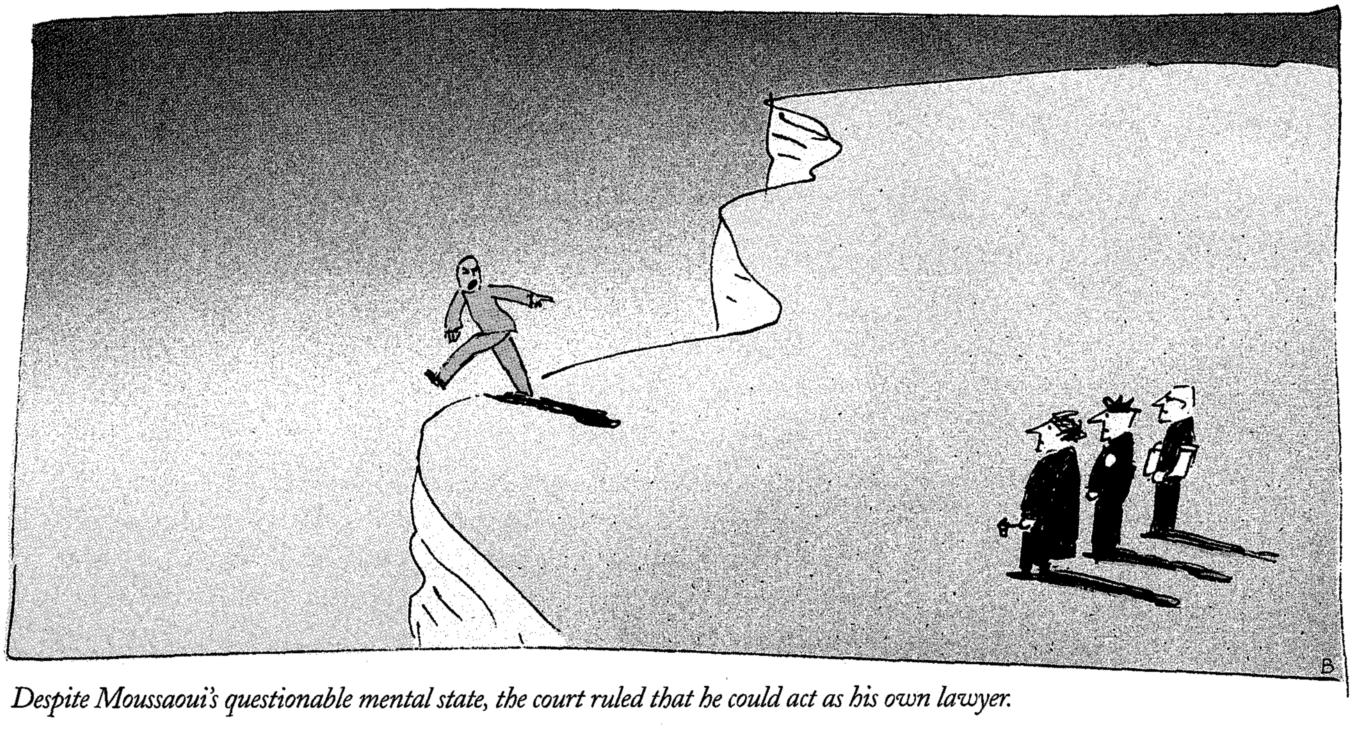
THE TWENTIETH MAN

Has the Justice Department mishandled the case against Zacarias Moussaoui?

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

About six years ago, Zacarias Moussaoui, who is now facing trial on capital charges as the alleged twentieth man in the September 11th aircraft hijackings, travelled to Chechnya with a childhood friend to join separatists in their fight against Russian control. At the time, young men from throughout the Muslim world were arriving in the region, which was regarded, after the Russian defeat in Afghanistan, as the site of a new jihad. Moussaoui was a Frenchman of Moroccan descent, and his friend was also from an immigrant family. Evidently, Moussaoui did not impress his superiors in the operation. When the Chechens decided that the foreign volunteers were more trouble than they were worth, Moussaoui was told to leave. (His friend was invited to stay, and was later killed, reportedly while filming combat scenes for an Islamic Web site.) "They sent Moussaoui packing," one of the lawyers appointed to represent him told me. "Who wants him around? He brought nothing to the table. He's trouble."

In February, 2001, Moussaoui showed up at the Airman Flight School, in Norman, Oklahoma. He was now thirty-two, and had continued to travel in pursuit of fundamentalist causes. He had been in Afghanistan (where he is alleged to have spent time in an Al Qaeda training camp), in Pakistan, and in Malaysia, while maintaining a base of sorts at a radical mosque in North London. When he arrived in America, two weeks after returning to London from a trip to Pakistan, he told customs he had thirty-five thousand dollars in cash. His sudden interest in flying had led him to pay five thousand dollars, in advance, for a series of lessons that should have allowed him to earn a pilot's license. Over the next three months, Moussaoui took fifty-seven hours of flight instruction, far more than the twenty hours most students need before flying solo. But he left the school in late May without a license.

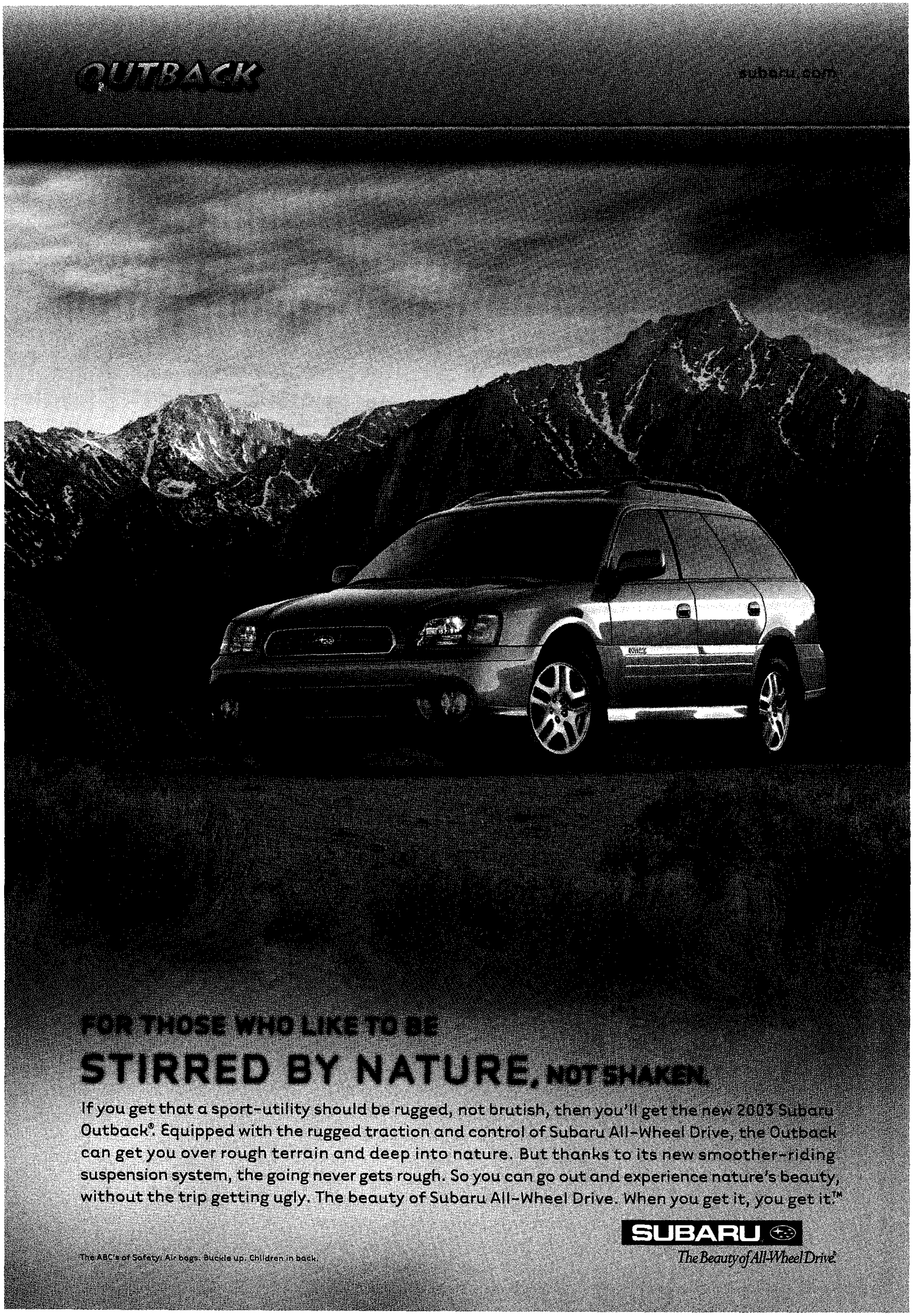


Despite Moussaoui's questionable mental state, the court ruled that he could act as his own lawyer.

GUY BILLOUT

Moussaoui's foreign travels and his ties to Islamic fundamentalists had brought him to the attention of the French intelligence services. After Moussaoui was arrested here on immigration charges in mid-August of 2001, the French gave the F.B.I. a dossier on him, which, according to an official who reviewed it, documented some of his contacts but provided no specific evidence against him. Nevertheless, the French report came to be viewed as an important missed warning. Americans wondered if the F.B.I. and other government agencies, with the "twentieth hijacker" in custody, had bungled the chance to put the pieces together and possibly stop the attacks.

The assumption of government bungling was predicated on the assumption that Moussaoui was indeed the twentieth hijacker. (There were five hijackers on each of the three planes that hit their targets, but only four on the flight that went down in Pennsylvania.) Moussaoui has said in federal court that he was a member of Al Qaeda, but he has denied any involvement in the hijackings. Many present and former F.B.I. and C.I.A. officials have told me that they believe he was "a wanna-be," as one put it, and far too volatile and unstable to handle a long-term undercover terrorist operation. Nevertheless, they said, Moussaoui may have crucial knowledge about Al Qaeda. "He knew how the system worked and knew how to get in contact," a former



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C.I.A. official said. The real bungling, this official and others believe, has been the handling of Moussaoui since September 11th and the framing of the indictment against him; for one thing, no federal prosecutor has discussed a plea bargain with him since the indictment, late last year. The case against Moussaoui, like the war on terrorism, is far more complex than the government has revealed.

After his failure at the flight school in Oklahoma, Moussaoui decided to try again, this time in Minnesota. He arrived at the Pan Am International Flight Academy, in Eagan, near St. Paul, on August 11th. According to Clancy Prevost, his instructor, he seemed to be just another wealthy foreigner with a passion for flying—"friendly and amiable." Prevost, a former Navy and Northwest Airlines pilot, said, "I had a terrible time, because he had no knowledge. He knew nothing. He had no spatial skills. But he was a customer, and you wanted to give him his money's worth, and so it boiled down to me just telling him stories. We had lunch and shot the breeze. There was nothing to indicate that this guy was anything other than a genial businessman who liked to hang out with pilots and could tell the girls that he flew a 747."

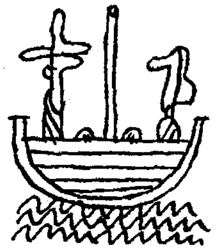
Moussaoui is known as the man who told his instructor that he wanted to learn only how to fly a plane in the air, not how to take off or land. According to Prevost, however, "He never said that. He did say, 'I want to take off from London Heathrow Airport and land at J.F.K., in New York.' But he wasn't skilled enough to do it, even in a simulator."

There was one disquieting note. After a few days of lessons, Prevost told Moussaoui that his goal as a flight instructor was to put the student in a position to take over a transoceanic flight in case of emergency. "He said, 'I'd rather take a parachute and jump out.' " Prevost was amused, and informed him that the cabin pressure would make it impossible for him to get the door open. He told Moussaoui a story, well known in pilot circles, about a fire started by passengers making tea on a butane stove in the main cabin of a Saudi Arabian airliner. As he remembered it, they were on a pilgrimage during Ramadan. The passengers, unable to get a door open, burned to death. "I asked about Ramadan—'What is that? Are you a Muslim?' Moussaoui said, 'I am nothing.' "

"He sort of flushed," Prevost continued. "It wasn't the right reaction. That's when I said to myself, 'Hey, wait a minute. What are we doing here? He's a nice guy, but he has no knowledge of airplanes. Professionally, we should check him out.' " Prevost reported his misgivings to the Pan Am administrators, who, after some hesitancy, called the F.B.I.

On August 16th, Moussaoui was arrested near the flight school by agents of the F.B.I. and the Immigration and Naturalization Service and charged with overstaying his visa. Like many immigration detainees, he was taken to the county jail. When the federal agents began to question him, he initially seemed willing to talk. (His English was good enough for him to have earned a master's degree in international business from South Bank University, in London.) According to one of his court-appointed attorneys, he coöperated with the agents until he was asked whether he was planning an act of terrorism involving an airplane. "His answer was 'I want a lawyer,' " the attorney told me. He didn't get one. Instead, according to the attorney, the agents stopped the interrogation and decided, in effect, to handle the case as a visa matter. (Immigration detainees are not entitled to lawyers.)

Over the next few days, however, the Minnesota agents tried to get F.B.I. headquarters to seek a special national-security warrant, under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, for a secret search of Moussaoui's computer and personal belongings, on the ground that they had reason to believe he was a foreign agent. (Moussaoui had refused to give them access.) Headquarters turned the request down—a decision that later became controversial. There were no further attempts to interrogate him in late August and early September. (A spokesman for the F.B.I. in Minneapolis declined to comment.) Moussaoui's status didn't change until after September 11th,



when, along with hundreds of other Muslim suspects, he was declared a material witness, and was sent to New York.

The charges against Moussaoui were announced on December 11th by Attorney General John Ashcroft, who described the indictment, handed down by a Virginia grand jury, as "a chronicle of evil." Moussaoui was charged "with undergoing the same training, receiving the same funding, and pledging the same commitment to kill Americans as the hijackers." There were six counts levelled against him: conspiracy to commit international terrorism; to commit aircraft piracy; to destroy aircraft; to use weapons of mass destruction; to murder federal employees; and to destroy property. The first four counts carried the death penalty.

The evidence that the government has presented thus far is largely circumstantial. The search of Moussaoui's computer—a warrant was granted on the afternoon of September 11th—apparently yielded nothing that would have foretold the attack or tied him to it. The indictment depicts Moussaoui as having followed a pattern of activity similar to that of many of the hijackers. Like them, he spent months in flight training, he bought flight-deck videos for commercial airplanes from a pilots' store in Ohio, and he joined a gym. Two of the hijackers are also said to have visited the flight school in Oklahoma the year before Moussaoui did. In the fall of 2000, Moussaoui had been given a letter stating that he was being retained as a "marketing consultant" by Infocus Tech, a Malaysian company; the company's managing director was later linked in press reports to some of the hijackers.

The most specific evidence in the indictment linking Moussaoui to the September 11th conspirators is that, in August, 2001, someone using the name of Ahad Sabet wired fourteen thousand dollars to him from train stations in Hamburg and Düsseldorf. Ahad Sabet is the alias of Ramzi bin al-Shibh, a known Al Qaeda intermediary, who also funnelled money to at least one of the hijackers and was named as a co-conspirator in the Moussaoui indictment. He had sought four times before September 11th to get a visa to the United States, and, in a broadcast on Al-Jazeera on the day after the anniversary of the attacks, he claimed that he was meant to be the twentieth hijacker. The indictment also notes that Moussaoui and al-Shibh were in London at the same time, in December, 2000, just before Moussaoui flew to Pakistan. The government's theory is that al-Shibh's visa problems forced the conspirators to turn to Moussaoui.

Through careful detective work, German police were able to recover al-Shibh's fingerprint on a Western Union receipt for a payment sent to Moussaoui in Ahad Sabet's name, helping to establish that the men were one and the same. But the Germans have been unwilling to give this piece of evidence to the Justice Department. There is no death penalty in Germany, and authorities there, as in France, refuse to participate in any legal proceedings that could lead to death.

Two weeks ago, al-Shibh was arrested by Pakistani forces, after a yearlong hunt, in a shoot-out in Karachi. His capture complicates the Moussaoui trial. He was turned over to the United States for questioning and brought to an undisclosed military base, and is expected to be tried by a military tribunal. "They're gearing up," Eugene R. Fidell, an expert on military law, said. "This is going to take months to sort out, especially if al-Shibh has exculpatory material, and both sides are probably going to ask for an extension of time. Al-Shibh has to be made available, but what if he takes the Fifth?" The trial, presided over by Judge Leonie M. Brinkema, of the United States District Court in Alexandria, Virginia, is now set for January. Moussaoui's defense team, which has so far been denied access to captured Al Qaeda members, will certainly seek testimony from al-Shibh, according to Edward B. McMahon, Jr., one of Moussaoui's attorneys. "Judge Brinkema is going to have a moment of truth," Fidell said. "It's the highest-stakes poker you could imagine."

If the government's case is built on the similarities between Moussaoui's activities and those of the known hijackers, it must account for the fact that, though he shared their allegiance to Al Qaeda and its leader, Osama bin Laden, his behavior in America was strikingly different from theirs. The government has found evidence of e-mails and meetings among the nineteen, but none between any of them and Moussaoui. The hijackers tried to fit in to American life—drink-

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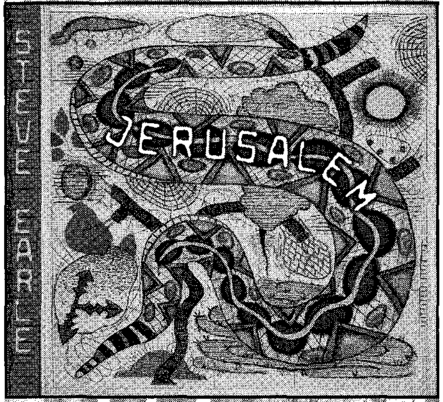

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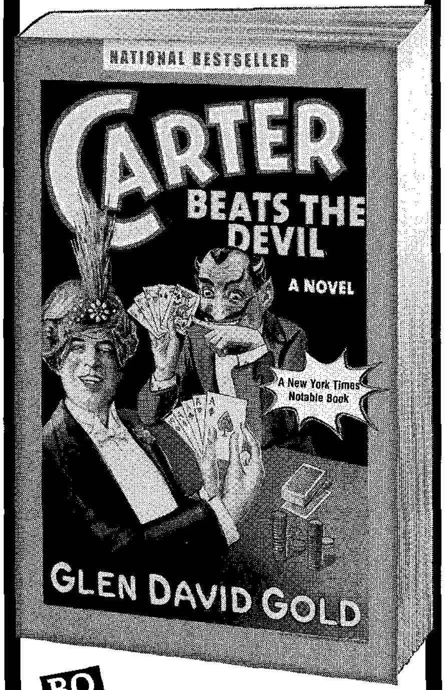

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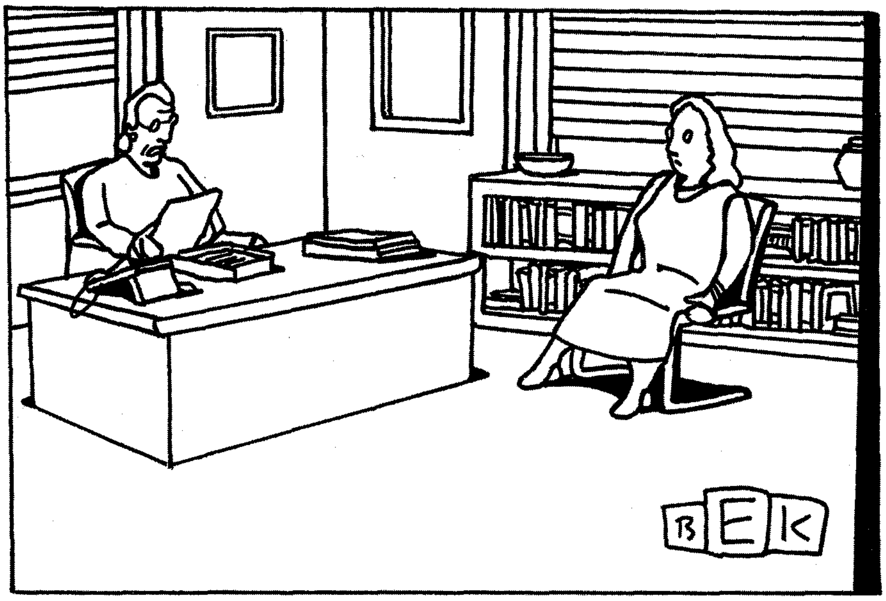

“I can see you drew heavily from your own bad writing.”

• •

ing in bars, for instance. Moussaoui, while in Oklahoma, remained largely aloof, although he was voluble about his Islamic beliefs. He criticized members of a mosque in Norman for not lowering their gaze when meeting women and for looking at lightly clad cheerleaders. “He went around making a nuisance of himself everywhere he went,” Frank W. Dunham, Jr., the federal public defender in charge of Moussaoui’s defense team, said. “He was not flying under the radar by any means.” Another Moussaoui attorney depicted him as “wearing his fundamentalism on his sleeve,” and said, “He was incredibly argumentative—always.”

On March 28th, Ashcroft announced that he had told Paul J. McNulty, the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, to seek the death penalty for Moussaoui. If he was found guilty, the jury would then hear testimony and deliberate on the sentence in a separate penalty phase. In a notice of intent to the court, summarizing what the government would argue, McNulty wrote that death was warranted because Moussaoui, although not present on September 11th, intentionally and with premeditation participated in the act, in “an especially heinous, cruel and depraved manner” and with “reckless disregard for human life.”

In pursuing the death penalty, the Justice Department set a high standard for itself. It accused Moussaoui of a level of involvement that included advance knowledge of the plans, and of the scope and intent of the mission. In this view, he wasn’t just a candidate for the twentieth hijacker: he was one of the actual hijackers in all but the final execution, and was prevented from acting on his intentions only by his arrest. The government, which is continuing to hunt down Al Qaeda members around the world, and to interrogate those already captured, may have more vital information by the time of the trial, but so far there is little evidence on the record of what Moussaoui actually did to further the conspiracy.

A Justice Department official told me that as the government makes its case before the jury it will stress the “unspeakable horror of that day, and what followed.” The prosecutors anticipate, he said, that Moussaoui’s lawyers will attempt “to minimize his significance and nearness” to September 11th, and argue that he was “not worthy.” But, the official added, “Everything we are aware of connects Moussaoui to September 11th, and that speaks volumes. Because there’s nothing to compare to that crime—it’s a crime of history. The path that Moussaoui took is the heart of the case, and, at the end of the day, a jury will hear evidence that supports the story the indictment tells.”

The Justice Department official further told me that in the months after the terror attacks there was never a thought

JUST KIDDING

Books for Children and Young Adults

by Douglas Chilcott

Like the colorful cover of a children's book, the magic and excitement of a children's bookstore is often conjured up by the very name it goes by. The monikers of these portals to fun and imagination can be as mischievous and as enchanting as the titles of the books they stock. Wild Rumpus in Minneapolis. Snow Goose Bookstore in Stanwood, Washington. Grrreat Bears and Childhood Delights in Baltimore.

To open the door of any of the hundreds of independent bookstores coast to coast is oftentimes to embark on a journey of epic proportions. Intriguing and playful characters beckon from the children's sections' shelves. In perfect scale, within these walls, the world of pretend seems almost real.

Given the importance of providing children and young adults with memorable literary experiences, the selection of books in these stores surpasses mere entertainment. Independent booksellers take this responsibility seriously. "When it comes to matching a child to a specific book, generic recommendation lists don't work," notes Barb Bassett of Red Balloon Bookshop in St. Paul, Minnesota. "For every person that comes into the store, we take the time to discover their interests and guide them to related books. Often, they're genuinely surprised by what they find."

In addition to stocking only the most enticing tales, independent booksellers offer their young clients in-store opportunities that include storytimes and the chance to meet celebrated authors and illustrators. "Kids are endlessly fascinated by how writers write and to learn about where characters and stories come from," says Susan Scott of The Secret Garden in Seattle. Indeed for many independent booksellers, literacy advocacy reaches beyond the boundaries of the store. "We work closely with local schools to develop author appearance programs and book fairs for their students," notes Scott.

Illustration by Gene Cyrus courtesy of The BookWorks, Marysville, WA; book images by Stephen Attard

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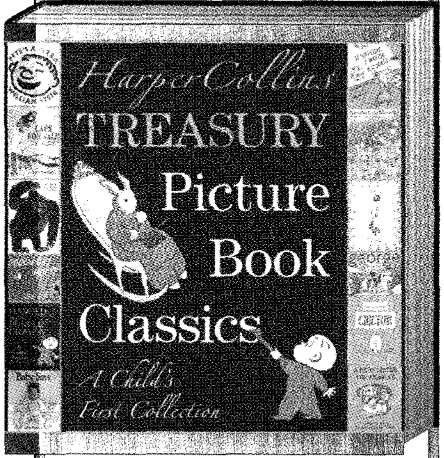

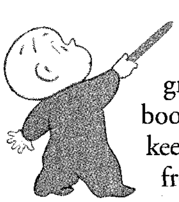

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—from the Introduction by Valerie Lewis, Author of *Valerie & Walter's Best Books for Children* and co-founder of Hicklebee's Bookstore

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Periodically throughout the year, the informed and inspired recommendations of these independent booksellers are gathered in the **Children's Book Sense 76** list, and a current selection from that list for children and young adults is provided below.

CHOCOLATE PARACHUTES

No matter what the old Victorian maxim may imply, children are most definitely both seen and heard in the annals of history. Several new works of nonfiction relate the small yet significant roles children have played against the backdrop of true, and oftentimes sobering, events.

It turns out that more than just the bare necessities were falling from the heavens over Berlin during the 1948 airlift. Margot Theis Raven's "Mercedes and the Chocolate Pilot: A True Story of the Berlin Airlift and the Candy that Dropped from the Sky," illustrated by Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen (Sleeping Bear Press), tells the story of a young girl who is delighted to find chocolate parachuting into her backyard—the gift of an anonymous American pilot.

Children's
DRAGONWINGS
BOOKSTORE
Gifts

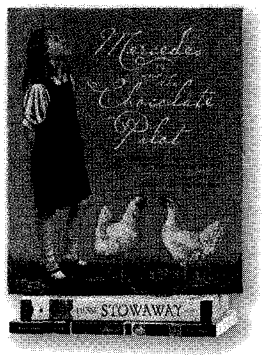
Dragonwings Bookstore, Waupaca, WI

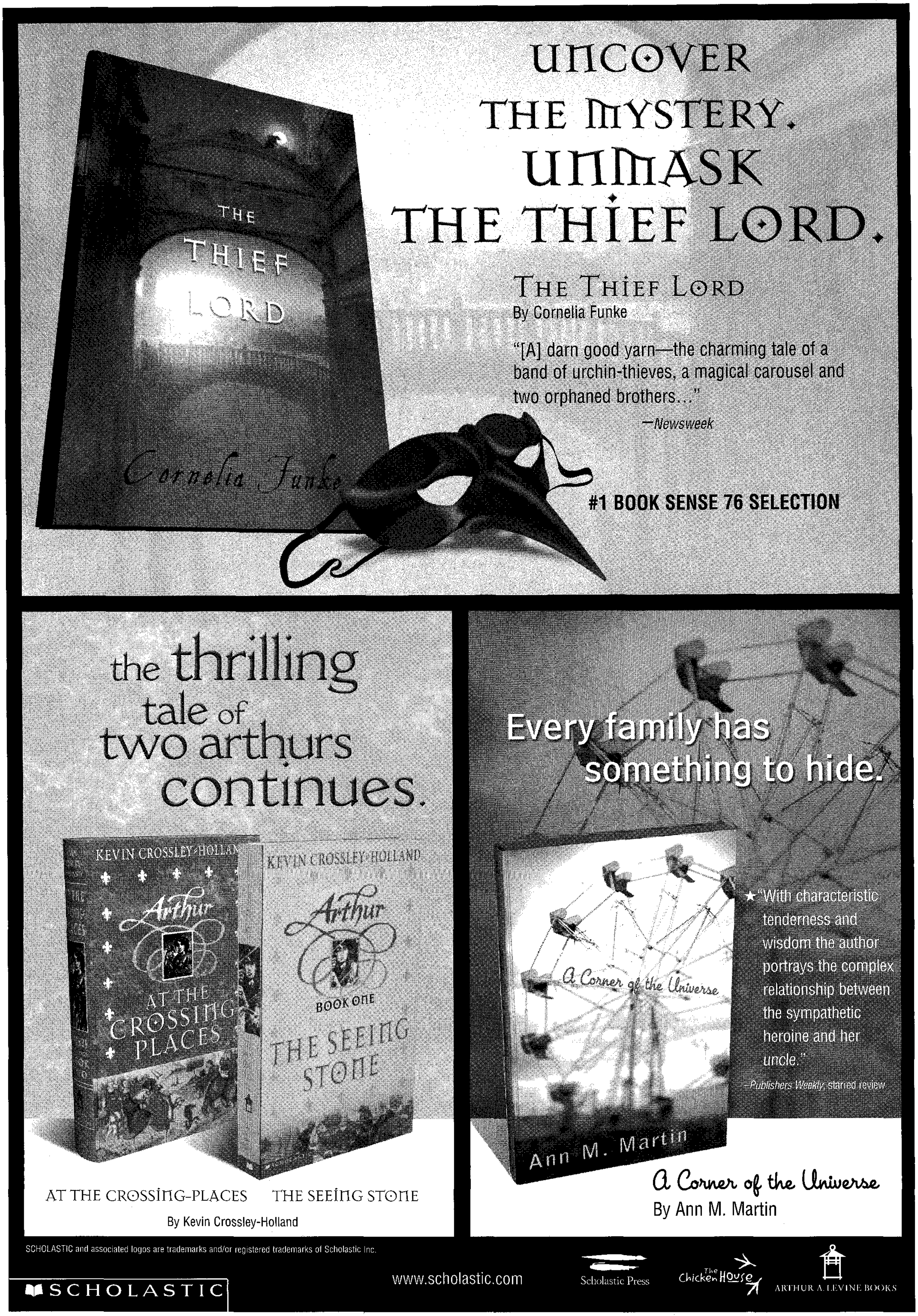
PUBLISHER'S PICK

You Know You Love Me: A Gossip Girl Novel by Cecily von Ziegesar (Little, Brown and Company) offers a fascinating foray into the lives and loves of some of New York's most sophisticated teens.

Lisa Fabiano of Hearts & Stars Bookshop in Canton, Massachusetts, notes of the tale, "that even in the toughest times, there are those who display acts of kindness. You will be left with a great sense of hopefulness."

The crow's nest of a ship may lay claim to the best view, but the perspective of a stowaway, confined to the shadows below deck, offers insights invisible to most. Karen Hesse's "Stowaway" (Aladdin Paperbacks) is based on the diaries kept by Nick Young, an eleven-year-old stowaway on the





UNCOVER
THE MYSTERY.
UNMASK
THE THIEF LORD.

THE THIEF LORD
By Cornelia Funke

"[A] darn good yarn—the charming tale of a band of urchin-thieves, a magical carousel and two orphaned brothers..."
—*Newsweek*

#1 BOOK SENSE 76 SELECTION

the thrilling tale of two arthurs continues.

AT THE CROSSING-PLACES THE SEEING STONE
By Kevin Crossley-Holland

Every family has something to hide.

★"With characteristic tenderness and wisdom the author portrays the complex relationship between the sympathetic heroine and her uncle."
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

A Corner of the Universe
By Ann M. Martin

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Cornelia Funke
KEVIN CROSSLEY-HOLLAND
Arthur
AT THE CROSSING PLACES
BOOK ONE
THE SEEING STONE
A Corner of the Universe
Ann M. Martin

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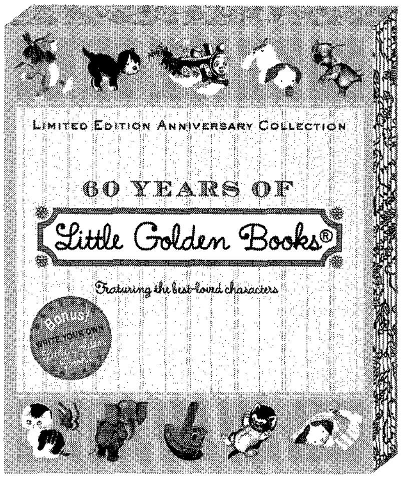
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H.M.S. Endeavour—the vessel Captain James Cook would sail around the world in 1768. Bassett of St. Paul's Red Balloon Bookshop calls the narrative "a riveting adventure on the high seas. It should have been a Newbery-award contender."

The Saturdays
Elizabeth Enright

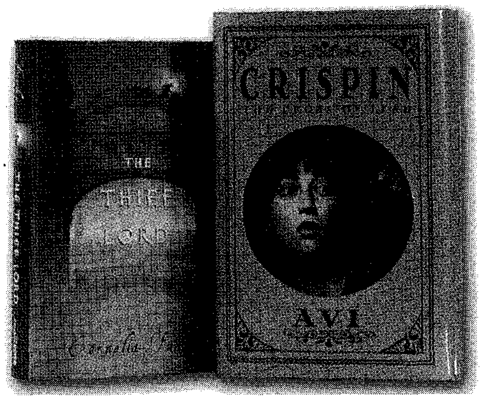
PUBLISHER'S PICK

One allowance doesn't go too far, but imagine the possibilities if you could pool the allowance of every kid in the family. That's exactly what four siblings do in the classic novel **The Saturdays** by Elizabeth Enright (Henry Holt).

Few stories resonate on these shores as strongly as those of inspiring Americans who overcome daunting obstacles to achieve great things. While this genre can sometimes meander into cliché, the heroes themselves seldom fail to strike a chord. In 1983, Mawi Asgedom's family fled the civil war in his native Ethiopia. Sixteen years later, Mawi was delivering the commencement address at his Harvard graduation. In "Of Beetles & Angels: A Boy's Remarkable Journey From a Refugee Camp to Harvard," edited by Dave Berger (Megan Tingley Books/Little, Brown and Company), Mawi relates his inspirational story. Notes Linda Ramsdell of the Galaxy Bookshop in Hardwick, Vermont, "Living in poverty and confronting racism, Asgedom still looks for and finds beauty in other people. An inspiring true story."

SERFING THE CENTURIES

The past provides storytellers with an almost limitless palette with which to paint new characters and create new tales. Two new books transport readers—one a modern day tale set within the ancient waterways of Venice and the other during the medieval quagmire of fourteenth-century England.



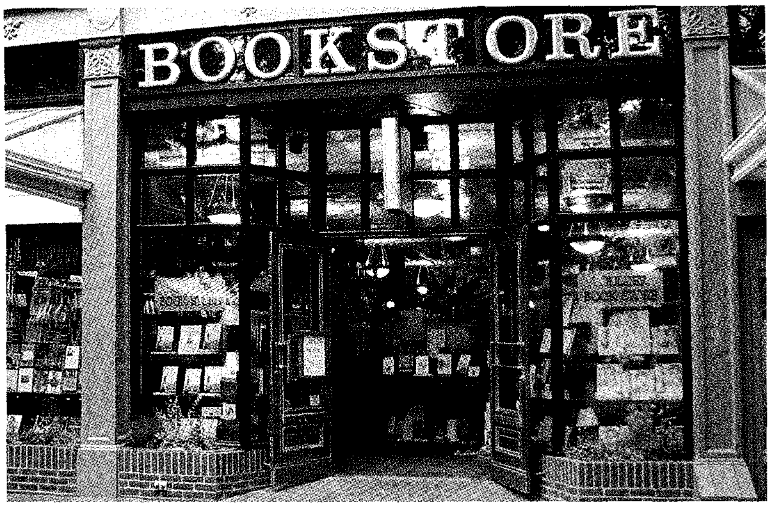
Amid the architectural and cultural enchantment that is Venice, Cornelia Funke has created "The Thief Lord" (The Chicken House/Scholastic). Two young boys fleeing a wicked aunt and uncle become entangled in an underground troupe of clever thieves who prey on the elegant palaces that line the city's canals. Nikki Mutch of the University of Connecticut Co-op in Storrs, Connecticut, writes, "Full of mischief, adventure, heroes, and magic, this is one of those books that will be read and loved by people of all ages."

Silly & Sillier

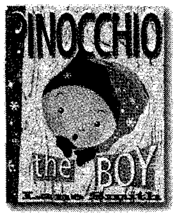
PUBLISHER'S PICK

Storytelling is a truly global art. **Silly & Sillier: Read-Aloud Tales from Around the World**, told by Judy Sierra and illustrated by Valeri Gorbachev (Alfred A. Knopf) features twenty tales from twenty different countries and six continents.

Adolescent angst is hardly a new convention. The thirteen-year-old title character of Avi's "Crispin: The Cross of Lead" (Hyperion Books for Children) has more than his share of issues. There's his false con-



Book Store, Boulder, CO

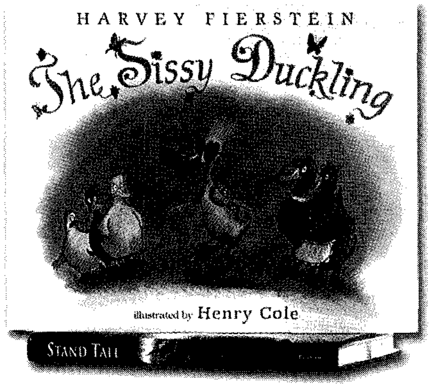


PUBLISHER'S PICK

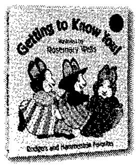
Careful what you wish for. That's the premise of Lane Smith's new **Pinocchio the Boy—Or Incognito in Collidi** (Viking Children's Books) in which the former puppet adjusts to life as a boy.

viction for a crime, his real identity, and—this being England in 1376—the plague. Jen Butler-Brown of Grass Roots Books & Music in Corvallis, Oregon, heartily recommends the novel. "We see the effects of the plague, the social order of the day, and a political change for equality in England. Not to worry, the story is full of intrigue and excitement."

Red Nose Redux



Though from a child's perspective being excluded from reindeer games might be the least of it, is there anything as cruel as the story of the unfortunate red-nosed Rudolph? Delivering a reassuring message, countless children's books over the years have demonstrated that, ultimately, even the most striking of misfits fits in. Some new titles add to this tradition.



PUBLISHER'S PICK

Guaranteed to be one of children's favorite things this fall, **Getting to Know You! Rodgers and Hammerstein Favorites**, illustrated by Rosemary Wells (HarperCollins Publishers), gathers sixteen treasured songs in a picture book.

Feathers really fly in "The Sissy Duckling" by Harvey Fierstein, illustrated by Henry Cole (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers). In this case, the duck isn't ugly; he's just a bit fey. Sporting a flowered pink backpack, heart-shaped sunglasses, and a spikey coif, Elmer would rather stage a puppet show than score a touchdown or hit a home run. But when push comes to shove, Elmer proves his worth to the flock. "Power to the sissies," says Carolyn Sweeney of Chesterfield *Books in* Chesterfield Township, Michigan.

Twelve years old, six-foot-three-and-a-half (and still growing), they don't call him "Tree" for nothing! In Joan Bauer's "Stand Tall"

A larger-than-life
AMERICAN
LEGEND

New York's Bravest is the story of Mose, a 19th-century firefighter in New York City who became a larger-than-life American legend. Written by Mary Pope Osborne, this moving picture-book tale of heroism has been stunningly illustrated by Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher. *New York's Bravest* is destined to become an American picture book classic!

NEW YORK'S BRAVEST
by Mary Pope Osborne paintings by Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher

Advance Praise for *New York's Bravest*:

★ "Author and artist carefully and respectfully balance the tall-tale ingredients with actual events to craft a loving tribute."
—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, STARRED

★ "Gloriously illustrated."
—BOOKLIST, STARRED

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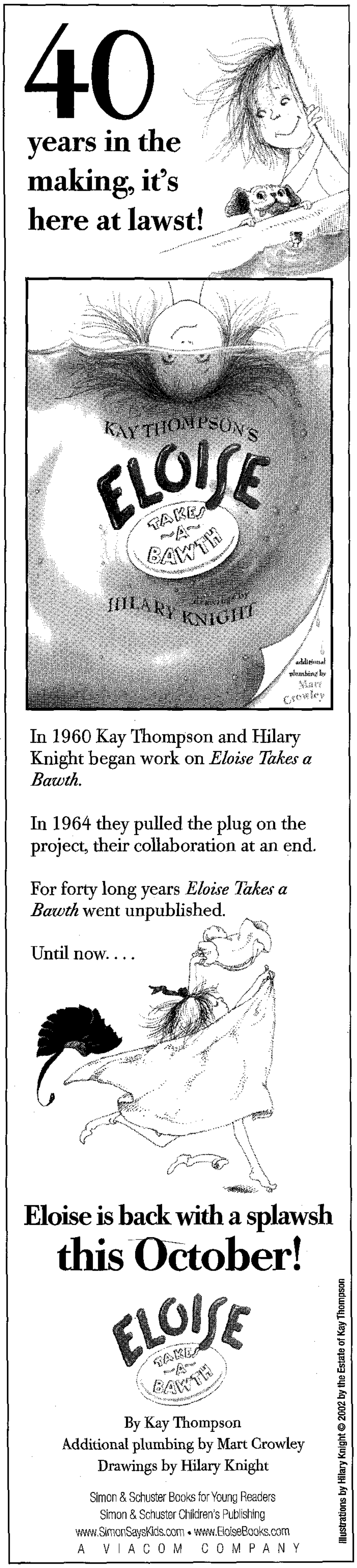
40 years in the making, it's here at lawst!

In 1960 Kay Thompson and Hilary Knight began work on *Eloise Takes a Bawth.*

In 1964 they pulled the plug on the project, their collaboration at an end.

For forty long years *Eloise Takes a Bawth* went unpublished.

Until now. . . .

Eloise is back with a splawsh this October!

By Kay Thompson
Additional plumbing by Mart Crowley
Drawings by Hilary Knight

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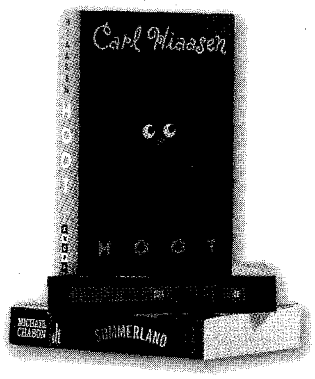
Illustrations by Hilary Knight © 2002 by the Estate of Kay Thompson

PUBLISHER'S PICKS
The popular pig is back. **Olivia Saves the Circus** by Ian Falconer (Atheneum Books for Young Readers) relates how the inimitable porker saves the day by doing everything from taming the lions to flying on the trapeze.

(G.P. Putnam's Sons), the school's tallest kid would do anything to be closer to average. His staggering height keeps on getting in his way until disaster strikes, and he realizes just how tall he really is. "When a massive flood threatens to wipe out the town, Tree rises to the occasion and finally finds his place among friends and family," reports Rebecca Mullin of Kids Ink Children's Bookstore in Indianapolis.

FAMILIAR FACES



For acclaimed writers of adult books, the idea of tackling something for children or young adults can be almost irresistible. This fall, a new crop of children's books brings characters and plots from the minds of acclaimed adult authors.

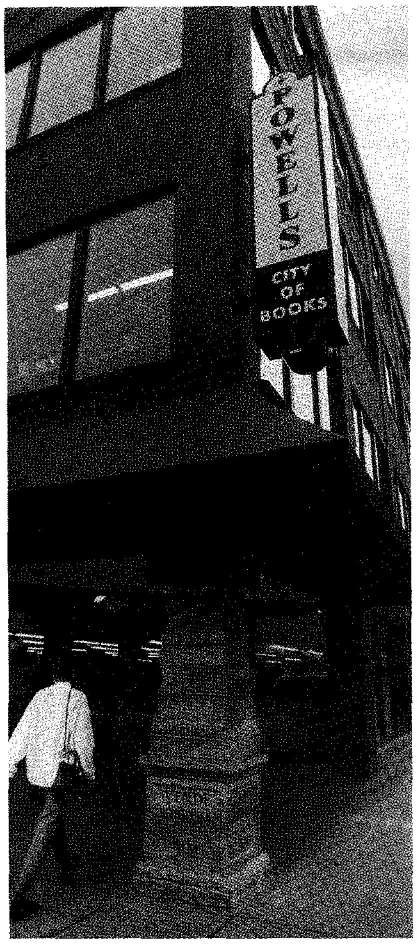
In the spirit of her well-known novels of magical realism, Isabel Allende's new book for young adults, "City of the Beasts" (HarperCollins; available November, 2002) relates the adventure of a fifteen-year-old boy who accompanies his gruff grandmother on an odyssey into the Amazon. Sarah Parker of Scott's Bookstore in Mount Vernon, Washington, appreciates the way the book "draws readers into the steamy heart of the Amazon rainforest. You will feel the humidity, smell the smells, and taste the fear as this page-turner approaches its climactic ending."

On the heels of a Pulitzer Prize-winning book, author Michael Chabon has penned a paean to baseball with "Summerland" (Talk Miramax Books). Of the sandlot fantasy, René Kirkpatrick of All for Kids Books & Music in Seattle says, "It's filled with things we love: baseball, summer, American folk heroes, and fairies and small folks. He took his time and used enough words to really show us what he wanted us to see."

Mystery master Clive Barker chases a modern-day Alice down a wild new rabbit hole in "Abarat" (Joanna Cotler Books). Fate thrusts young

BAY STREET TRADING CO.
BEAGLE BOOKS

Left: Bay Street Trading Co., Beaufort, SC; right: Beagle Books, Park Rapids, MN



Powell's City of Books, Portland OR

PUBLISHER'S PICK

Dear Mrs. LaRue
Letters from Obedience School

Reading like a canine *Cool Hand Luke*, **Dear Mrs. LaRue: Letters from Obedience School**, written and illustrated by Mark Teague (Scholastic Press), chronicles one dog's hilarious dog-eat-dog life in obedience school.

Candy Quackenbush over a magical threshold into an enchanted world populated by mechanical bugs, giant moths, miraculous cats, and a murderous wizard. Karen Miller of Anderson's Bookshop in Naperville, Illinois, admits that the book blew her away. "Clive Barker shows himself to be a master of a new genre," she says.

Carl Hiaasen's caustic and comic cultural missives have been entertaining adults for years. Now his wit and weirdness come to a whole new audience with "Hoot" (Alfred A. Knopf). A mysterious barefoot runner introduces Roy, a new arrival in Florida, to an intriguing cast of

The Pulitzer Prize-winning Author of
The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay

MICHAEL CHABON

SUMMERLAND

A NOVEL

"Chabon hits a high-flying home run, creating a vivid fantasy where baseball is king."
—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

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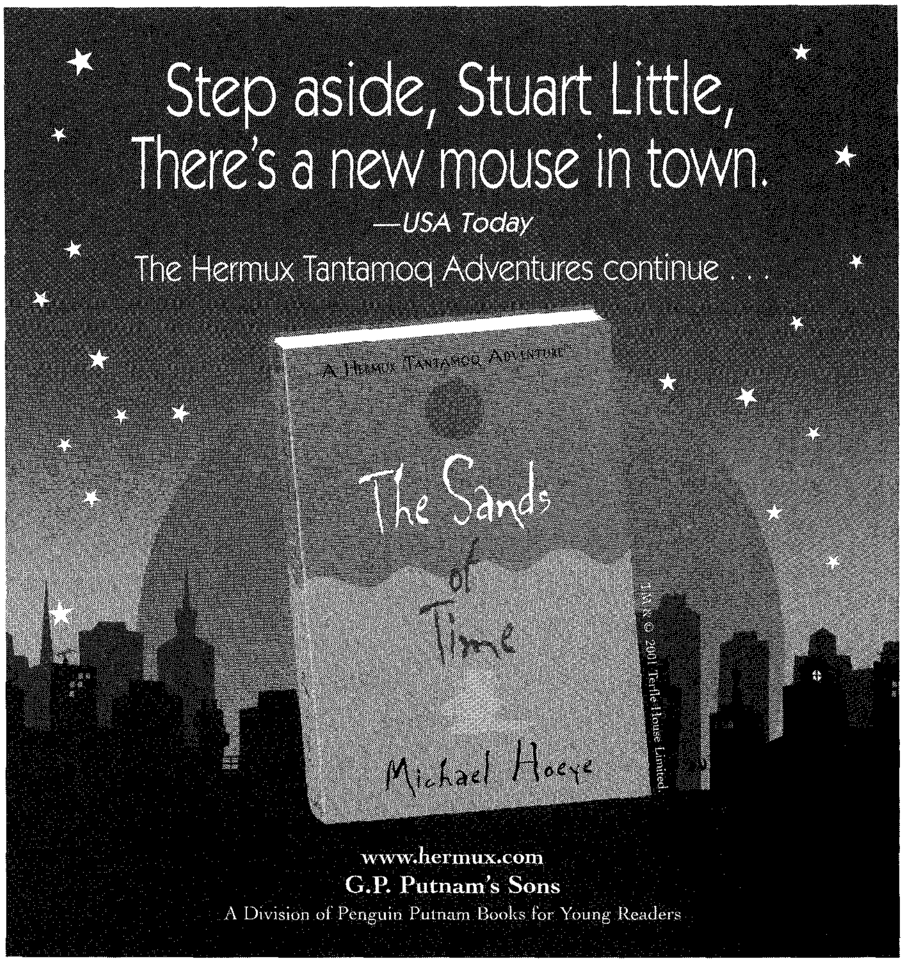
Step aside, Stuart Little,
There's a new mouse in town.
—*USA Today*

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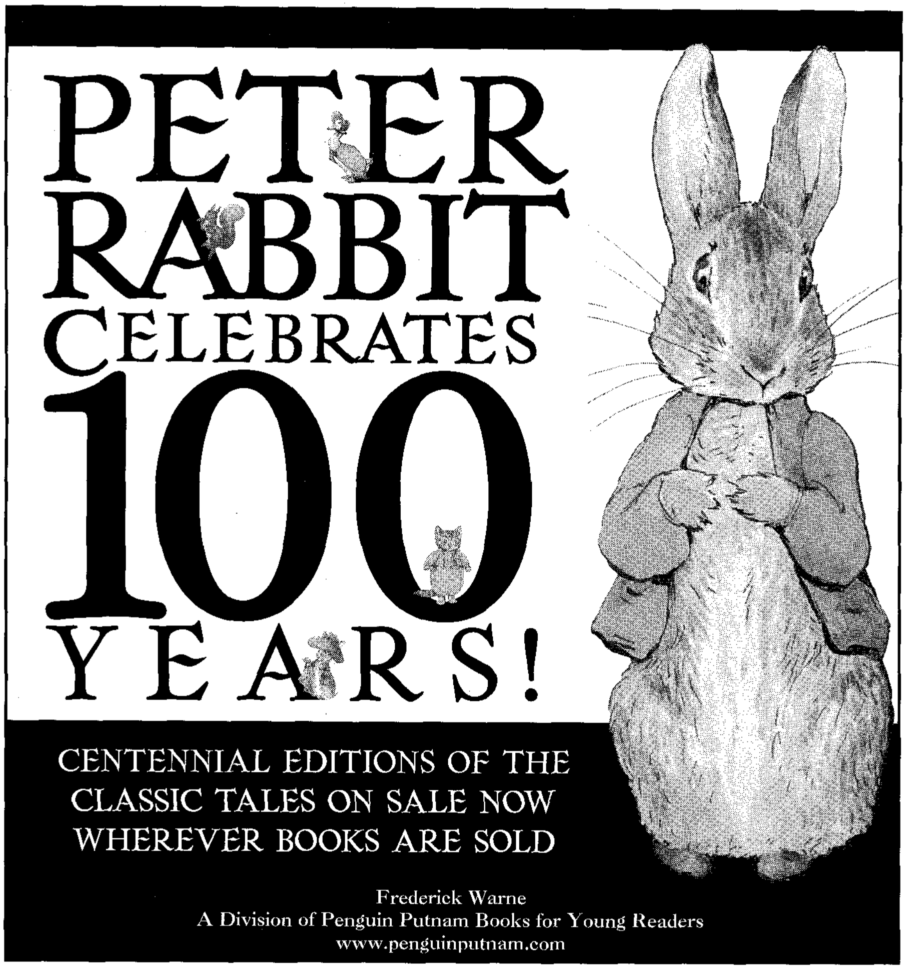
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"A SCRUMPTIOUS CROSS between DICKENS and MONTY PYTHON . . . BRILLIANT." —*The Guardian*

★ "Kids who lap up Lemony Snicket's series will take quickly to this tale and clamor for the next." —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

"It would be a sad spirit that didn't find this book hilarious." —*Financial Times*

A HOUSE CALLED AWFUL END
BOOK ONE IN THE EDDIE DICKENS TRILOGY
by Philip Ardagh

COMING SOON IN THE EDDIE DICKENS TRILOGY:
DREADFUL ACTS
BOOK TWO
TERRIBLE TIMES
BOOK THREE

HENRY HOLT BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS – WWW.HENRYHOLT.COM

Floridian creatures—both wild and human. "Like the best of the best, Hiaasen hasn't 'written down' to his youthful audience, he has just written, and it works beautifully," notes Scott of Seattle's Secret Garden.

PICTURE THIS

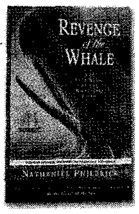
If a picture is worth a thousand words, some of the standouts on the picture-book shelf conjure up volumes as vast as the tomes of Tolstoy.

Margie Palatini tells a tale of a timid duck on shaky ground in "Earthquack!" illustrated by Barry Moser (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers). Mary Burns of The BookWorks in Marysville, Washington, adores this new spin on "the sky is falling." "The author plays with plenty of clever wording like 'Hogwash!—grunted the pig.' The illustrations would be enough reason to buy this book. Barry Moser puts fear in the face of a duck, alarm in the countenance of a goose."

EARTHQUACK!
THE THREE QUESTIONS

PUBLISHER'S PICK

Relating the story that provided the inspiration for the climactic scene in Moby-Dick, **Revenge of the Whale: The True Story of the Whaleship Essex** by Nathaniel Philbrick (G.P. Putnam's Sons) recounts how a ship of young sailors survived the assault of an angry whale.



And speaking of geese, a call from one Red R. Hood sets in motion a rollicking parody of noirish detective novels in George McClements' "Jake Gander, Storyville Detective: The Case of the Greedy Granny" (Hyperion Books for Children). Despite his name, Gander's no goose, and he's determined to solve the case of a

BOOKSHOP
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Bookshop Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA

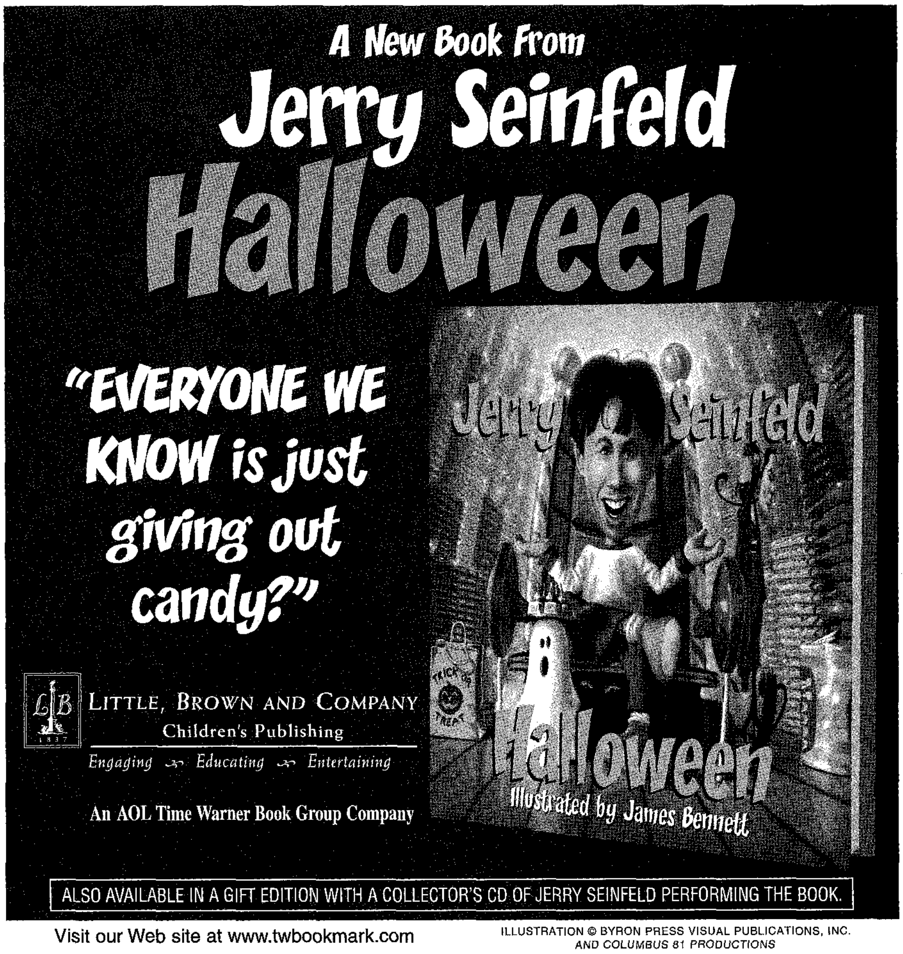
granny who's up to no good. "Adults will love the allusions to their favorite detective stories and kids will enjoy figuring out the ending," says Valerie Koehler of Blue Willow Bookshop in Houston, Texas.

PUBLISHER'S PICK

In his latest adventure, the world's youngest and most ingenious criminal mastermind collaborates with his former nemesis at the LEPrecon fairy police to rescue his long-lost father from kidnappers in **Artemis Fowl: The Arctic Incident** by Eoin Colfer (Hyperion Books for Children).

Tolstoy's novels may serve as the zenith of adult literary challenge, but thanks to "The Three Questions" (Scholastic Press), children need not wait to experience some of the sage Russian's wisdom. Based on a Tolstoy story and written and illustrated by Jon J. Muth, the book relates the tale of a boy whose encounter with an old turtle reveals some universal truths. Caroline Green of Malaprops in Asheville, North Carolina, calls this "a beautiful tale with a moral. The illustrations help reveal the simple wisdom of the book."

For more information on the Children's Book Sense 76 recommendation list, visit www.BookSense.com.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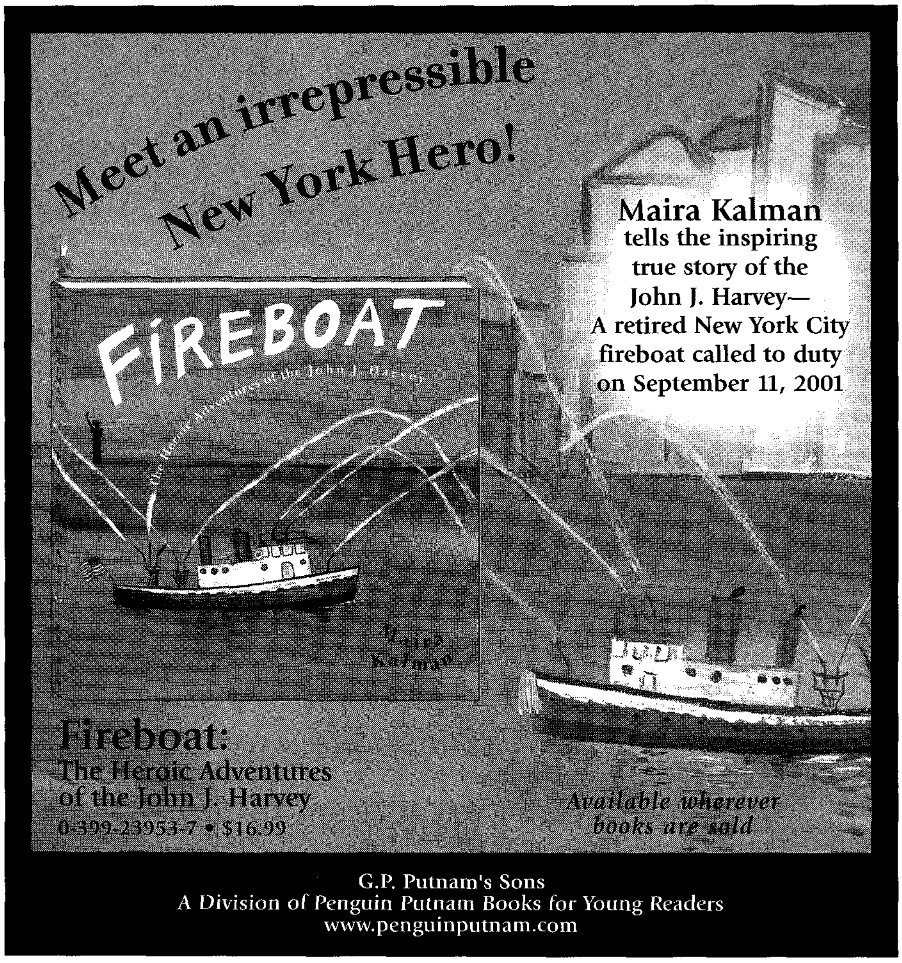
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INDEPENDENT BOOKSELLER RECOMMENDATIONS

CHILDREN'S 76

BOOK sense™

Here are the Top 10 Picks for this Book Sense 76, as tallied from hundreds of recommendations from independent booksellers.

1. THE THIEF LORD

by Cornelia Funke (Chicken House/Scholastic, $16.95) Ages 9-12. "Angels, dragons, and winged lions watch over Venice as six children sneak into houses for goods to steal and sell. On the run from a wicked aunt and uncle, they discover the magical powers of an old carousel and what people will do for eternal youth. Full of mischief, adventure, heroes, and magic, this is one of those books that will be read and loved by people of all ages!" —NIKKI MUTCH, UCONN CO-OP, STORRS, CT

3. WESLANDIA

by Paul Fleischman; illus. by Kevin Hawkes (Candlewick, $5.99 paper) Ages 4-8. "An innovative story about a young boy who, shunned by his peers, taps into his own creativity. In the process, he establishes a new food crop, a new language, and, in the end, a new civilization. Very highly recommended."—JOSEPH LAPPIE, DANNER'S BOOKS, MUNCIE, IN

5. STAND TALL

by Joan Bauer (Putnam, $16.99, 039923473X) Ages 9-12. "Bauer tells the story of an eigth-grade boy nicknamed 'Tree' due to his unusual height. He constantly feels awkward and is alienated from his peers. When a massive flood threatens to wipe out the town, Tree rises to the occasion and finally finds his place among friends and family." —REBECCA MULLIN, KIDS INK CHILDREN'S BOOKSTORES, INDIANAPOLIS, IN

7. PICTURES OF HOLLIS WOODS

by Patricia Reilly Giff (Wendy Lamb Books/Delacorte, $15.95) Ages 9-12. "Twelve-year-old Hollis Wood is an artistic, determined foster kid. She paints a picture of her troubled past and her current struggle to find a family that is rich with feeling, life, and characters. Giff's ability to draw the reader into her tender writing never fails to thrill me, both as a bookseller and a reader."—JONATHA FOLI, COPPERFIELD'S BOOKS, SEBASTOPOL, CA

9. CRISPIN: The Cross of Lead

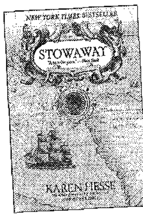
by Avi (Hyperion, $15.99) Ages 10-14. "Avi has done it again! He has created a story of interest to a wide range of ages. We are taken to Medieval England, and through the eyes of a serf, we see the effects of the plague, the social order of the day, and a political change for equality. Not to worry; the story is full of intrigue and excitement!"—JEN BUTLER-BROWN, GRASS ROOTS BOOKS & MUSIC, CORVALLIS, OR

2. MERCEDES AND THE CHOCOLATE PILOT: A True Story of the Berlin Airlift and the Candy That Dropped from the Sky

by Margot Theis Raven; illus. by Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen (Sleeping Bear Press, $17.95) Ages 5-10. "A very touching story. It shows that even in the toughest times, there are those who perform great acts of kindness. You will be left with a great sense of hopefulness." —LISA FABIANO, HEARTS & STARS BOOKSHOP, CANTON, MA

4. THE TREE

by Dana Lyons; illus. by David Danioth (Illumination Arts Pub., $16.95) Ages 4-8. "The illustrations are beautiful, the text is simple, and the message clear: It is our place to protect our natural resources. This book is very beautiful and moving."—JULIE HEIDTMAN, PAGE ONE, ALBUQUERQUE, NM



6. STOWAWAY

by Karen Hesse (Alladin, $6.99 paper) Ages 9-12. "Finally in paperback, here's a riveting adventure on the high seas, based on the actual diaries of Nick Young, an extra passenger on Captain Cook's ship. A great introduction to an amazing man and an amazing time period, it should have been a Newbery Award contender!"—BARB BASSETT, RED BALLOON BOOKSHOP, ST. PAUL, MN

8. THE TIGER RISING

by Kate DiCamillo (Candlewick, $5.99 paper) Ages 9-12. "DiCamillo has a way of getting under the skin of her characters in just a few well-chosen words. This book brings the reader into a magical story of loss and love and friendship discovered. I'm so glad I came upon this author early in her career so I can read every new book of hers as they come off the press."—FRED POWELL, MAIN STREET BOOKS, FROSTBURG, MD

10. OF BEETLES AND ANGELS: A Boy's Remarkable Journey from a Refugee Camp to Harvard

by Mawi Asgedom (Little, Brown, $9.95 paper) Teens. "Asgedom gives eloquent voice to his Ethiopian family and their new life in America. Living in poverty and confronting racism, he still looks for and finds beauty in other people. An inspiring true story."—LINDA RAMSDELL, THE GALAXY BOOKSHOP, HARDWICK, VT

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PERSONALITY - PASSION - KNOWLEDGE - COMMUNITY - CHARACTER of plea bargaining with Moussaoui or indicting him on lesser charges that might be easier to prove. At the time, he said, the public and the federal government "were looking for the criminal-justice system to do what it was designed to do—offer some justice for a great crime."

Those intelligence officials who are skeptical of the government's case stressed to me that they do not believe that Moussaoui was in any way an innocent bystander. They believe that he remained in close contact with Al Qaeda, as the payment from al-Shibh suggests, and came to the United States prepared to do grievous harm, if asked. Some believe that Moussaoui may have learned on his own, most likely at the mosque in North London, a few details about a planned attack involving airplanes and hoped to join in. But as yet no evidence has been presented that a call from any handlers ever came.

Throughout the spring, Frank Dunham's team of attorneys became convinced that their client's mental condition, already precarious, was deteriorating under the stress of solitary confinement, and that he was becoming increasingly paranoid. Moussaoui, in turn, became angrier and angrier at their conduct of the case.

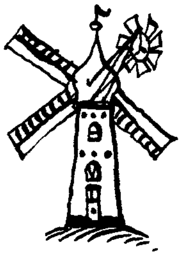
On April 22nd, Judge Brinkema permitted Moussaoui to speak at length at a pretrial hearing, and he stunned the court by railing against his lawyers and the American judicial system. He called for "the destruction of the United States of America," among other enemies of Islamic fundamentalism, and told the court that the United States was "orchestrating my sending to the safe haven, Bosnia style. Dead, injured. Judge, investigator, and the so-called defenders are all federal employees." His lawyers, he said, were "experienced in deception." He formally sought permission from Judge Brinkema to go *pro se*—to represent himself in court.

Moussaoui's outburst came during a hearing into his lawyers' protests over the conditions of his jailing. He has been held in solitary confinement, under extraordinary security conditions, which preclude unmonitored visits, telephone calls, or mail from anyone other than his attorneys. His cell was lit twenty-four hours a day. All visitors, including his attorneys, must undergo F.B.I. clearance, and all written materials, even memorandums from his attorneys, are subject to search. Moussaoui is also not allowed any contact with journalists, because of the government's fear that he will communicate a coded message to Al Qaeda. In a memorandum, the Justice Department had defended the restrictions as necessary "to avoid the 'substantial risk' that the defendant will communicate with others outside the prison to facilitate or incite additional acts of terrorism." One of Moussaoui's attorneys later told me angrily that the prosecutors, despite their concern about the danger of unfettered communication, "let him talk in open court for fifty minutes and never said boo" when his outbursts appeared to be undermining his own defense.

Federal courts have consistently ruled that criminal defendants such as Moussaoui have the right to defend themselves if their waiver of counsel is "knowing, voluntary, and intelligent." Although the full proceedings on Moussaoui's request are sealed, Judge Brinkema relied in part on a report filed by Dr. Raymond Patterson, a court-appointed psychiatrist. Patterson found that many of Moussaoui's notes and letters to Judge Brinkema were "well-researched," and concluded that his decision to waive counsel was not the product of mental illness. He attributed much of Moussaoui's seemingly strange behavior to the "subculture" to which he belonged.

Two mental-health experts retained by the defense, Dr. Xavier Amador, of Columbia University, and Dr. William Stejskal, of the University of Virginia, argued that Patterson's conclusions were unfounded and that Moussaoui needed further evaluation. After reading the papers, Judge Brinkema ruled from the bench on June 13th, without hearing testimony, that the defendant met the legal standard of competency.

Amador and Stejskal did not talk to Moussaoui. Instead, they met three times with his mother, Aicha el-Wafi, who had travelled to Virginia from France (she has been coöperating with the defense team for the past six months, against her



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son's wishes), and reviewed his French academic records and data from French social services.

The documents showed a family history of domestic violence and mental illness. According to Anne-Charlotte Dommartin, a French human-rights worker who served as a translator for the defense team, el-Wafi and her three older children—Zacarias was the youngest—had been physically abused by her husband on a regular basis. El-Wafi, Dommartin said, "was beaten so badly when she was eight months pregnant with Zacarias that she was hospitalized and kept there by the doctors until he was born." Two of his siblings suffered from serious psychiatric disorders as adults; one was hospitalized with a diagnosis of schizophrenia.

El-Wafi, who divorced Moussaoui's father when the boy was two years old, has told reporters that her son became involved with radical Islamic groups after moving from France to London, in 1992. On a visit home in 1997, el-Wafi told the London *Observer*, Moussaoui, who as a child had exhibited little interest in religion, showed up in traditional Muslim dress and reprimanded her for not being religious enough. She blamed the mosque in London for turning her "carefree, happy boy" into someone "unrecognizable."

Farhad Khosrokhavar, a University of Paris sociologist, calls men like Moussaoui "the new martyrs": alienated young working-class Arabs from France who see themselves as "not existing"—certainly not as Frenchmen or North Africans. They became attracted to radical Islam, and to the religious wars in Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Chechnya. Narbonne, the town near the Mediterranean where Moussaoui grew up, is an area of intense anti-immigrant sentiment. At school, he was placed, he believed, on a vocational track because of a bias against Arabs. Khosrokhavar, who interviewed more than a dozen convicted and would-be terrorists for a book published this month in Paris, depicts young men like Moussaoui as willing to "go to extremes in order to get out of this feeling of being 'less than nothing.'"

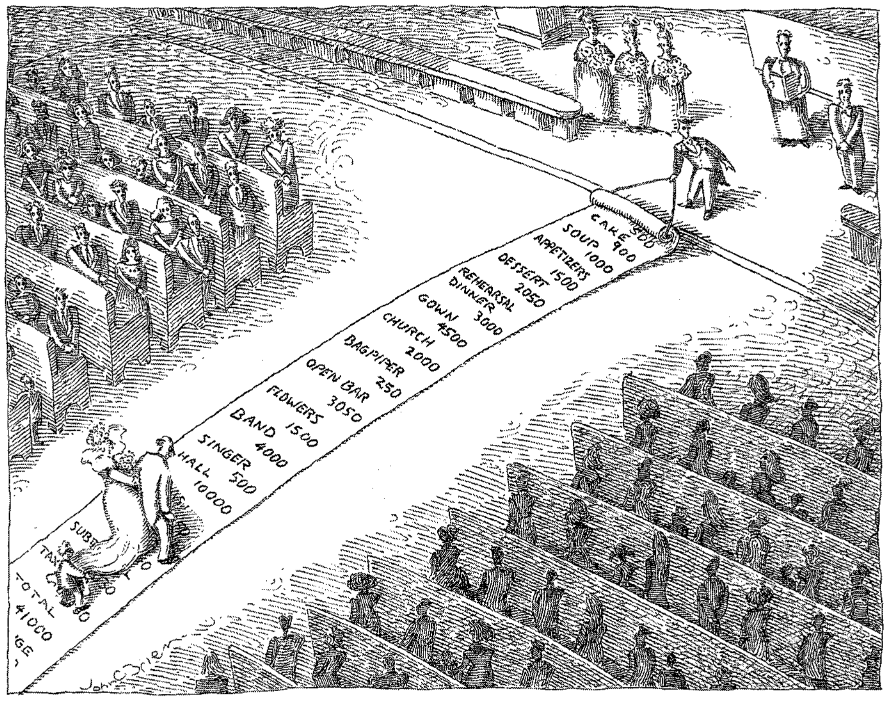
"Islam is the only plausible identity they can endorse," Khosrokhavar told me. "To accept their identity as French might mean accepting the inferiority they feel in their daily life as a second-rate citizen. The inevitable result is a hatred for France and, by extension, for the West." These young men, many of whom never learn to speak Arabic, have become known to French human-rights workers as *chair à canon* (cannon fodder)—easily recruited zealots who are willing to fight, and die, for a religious cause about which, initially, they know little.

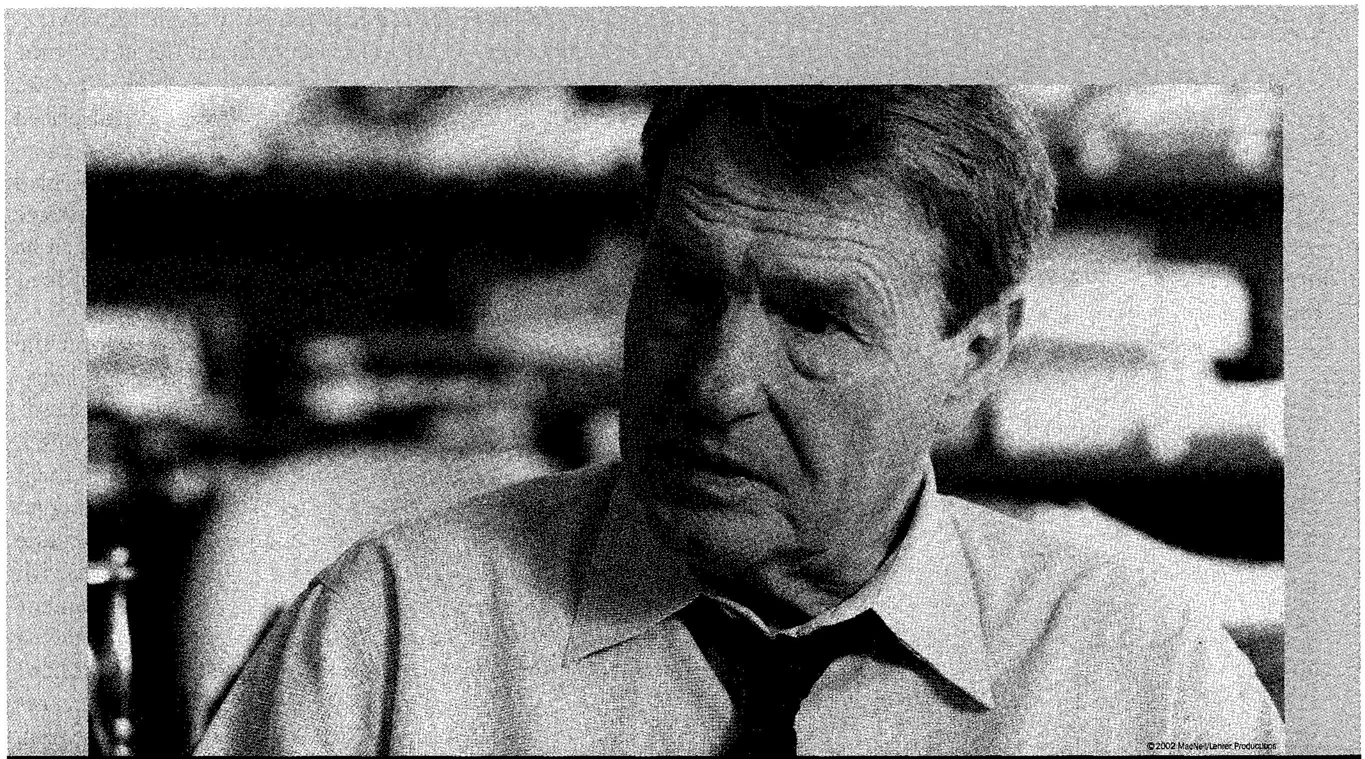
On May 21st, Coleen Rowley, a staff lawyer at the F.B.I. office in Minneapolis, sent a letter of complaint to Robert Mueller, the F.B.I. director. It was made public in *Time*, and prompted a wave of news accounts and congressional hearings into whether clues to the impending attacks had been missed before September 11th. Rowley's letter was primarily a complaint about the refusal of F.B.I. headquarters, after Moussaoui's arrest, to endorse the Minneapolis office's request for a special warrant, under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), to search his belongings. FISA, which created a secret federal court to hear spy cases, requires the government to show probable cause that the target is an agent of a foreign intelligence organization—a Russian mole inside the C.I.A., for example—or aiding or abetting a foreign power. F.B.I. headquarters had concluded that the flight instructor's apprehensions and the suspicions of the French did not meet this standard.

Rowley acknowledged that her F.B.I. colleagues had another option. They could have taken their evidence to the United States Attorney in Minneapolis, and asked that office to seek a routine criminal search warrant from a federal judge. However, Rowley wrote, she worried that, "for a lot of reasons including just to play it safe," the U.S. Attorney "might turn us down."

Since FISA was introduced, in 1978, civil libertarians have worried that the government would use the warrants, which allow secret wiretapping, as a mechanism for circumventing constitutional prohibitions on unreasonable searches and seizures. Evidence uncovered by FISA warrant can be introduced in criminal cases, but the warrants themselves can be granted only for intelligence investigations. After Congress expanded FISA's reach, in 1994, by allowing physical searches of homes and computers in addition to electronic surveillance, criminal investigators had increased incentive to use the act—as Rowley apparently hoped to do—as an expedient alternative to going before an ordinary judge. (The FISA court has issued some thirteen thousand warrants—a thousand in 2000 alone—and is known to have turned down only one request.) Jonathan Turley, a leading FISA critic, who teaches law at George Washington University, described Rowley's letter as "the first time I've seen in writing what we've been seeing for years: you go to FISA when you can't make a criminal case."

This spring, John Ashcroft issued





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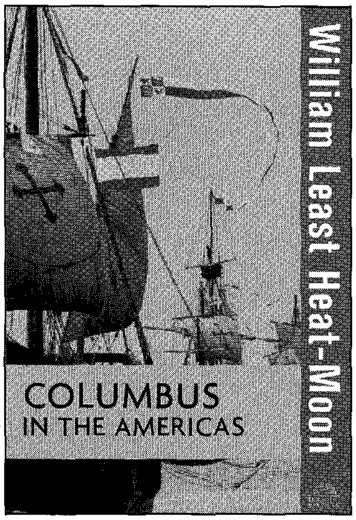

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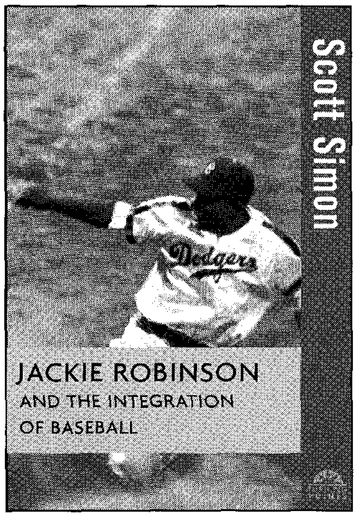

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new guidelines declaring that the passage of the U.S.A. Patriot Act after September 11th enabled federal authorities to seek FISA warrants "primarily for a law enforcement purpose, so long as a significant foreign intelligence purpose remains." The FISA court judges disagree with the Attorney General. In a decision issued in May (and made public in August), the court directed the Justice Department to "ensure that law enforcement officials do not direct or control the use of the FISA procedures to enhance criminal prosecution."

The decision, which has been appealed by the Justice Department, also noted that the government had admitted, in the fall of 2000, that F.B.I. agents had misled FISA judges in several cases about the extent to which their investigations involved criminal rather than intelligence matters.

Given the concerns about the abuse of the FISA process, the widespread assumption that headquarters had erred seriously in not granting the warrant to search Moussaoui's belongings distressed many law-enforcement officials. Little of that feeling showed, as Mueller publicly thanked Rowley for her letter and later assured members of the Senate Judiciary Committee that there would be no retaliation. "Rowley's rewriting history a little bit here," an intelligence official who reviewed the French material told me. "There's nothing in the French intelligence reports that connects Moussaoui as an agent of a foreign power." He added, "It's not that the French didn't think he was a bad person—we think that, too. The question is, was there something the French had that gets up over the FISA threshold? It's not there."

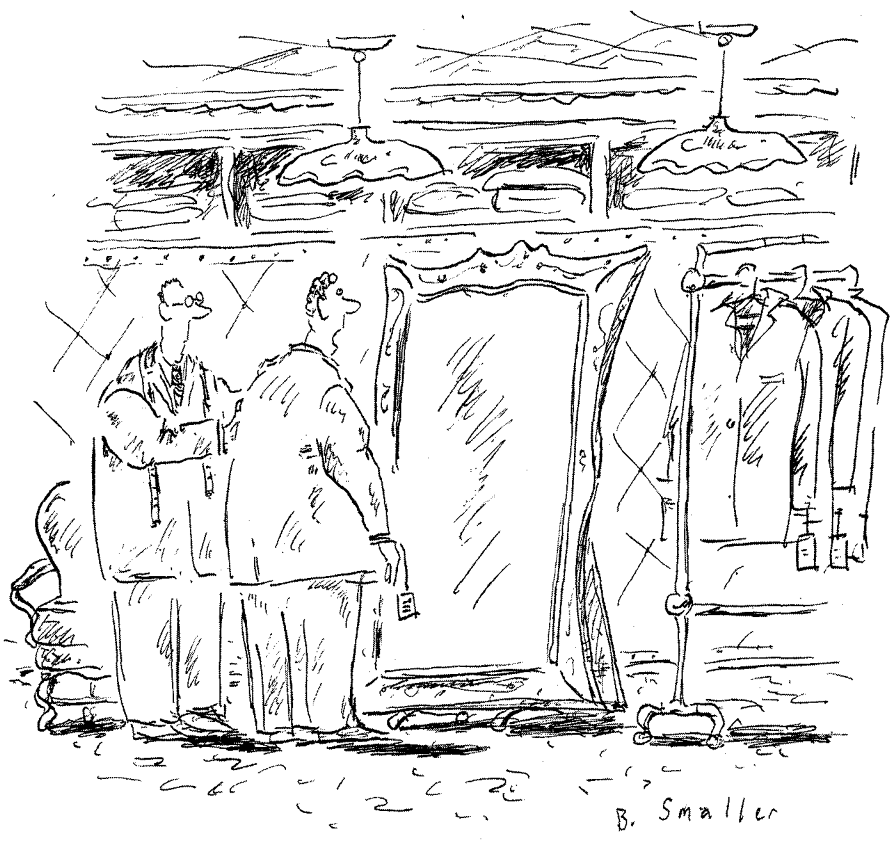
"The people in the Minneapolis office are dying to tell their side," B. Todd Jones, the former U.S. Attorney for the Minnesota District, told me, "but Rowley's been painted as Joan of Arc."

Over the summer, Moussaoui filed a stream of handwritten motions. They contained some glimpses of acute intelligence and awareness, but more often Moussaoui veered into angry ramblings. He insisted, in one motion, that the F.B.I. "will kill Zacarias Moussaoui to silence him." In another, he claimed that the F.B.I. was concealing evidence that it had him and the nineteen hijackers under surveillance the entire time he was in America—which, he said, proved his innocence—and had placed a "bug" in an electric fan in his apartment in Oklahoma. In a motion filed on July 15th, he asked Brinkema to force the F.B.I. to turn over the fan, which he called "hidden concrete evidence of their coverup operation."

Although Moussaoui had won the right to defend himself, Judge Brinkema decided that the federal defenders should stay on as standby counsel, and Moussaoui's relationship with them soured further. Whenever his mental health came under question, he became outraged. The lawyers I spoke with pointed to this as one of the fundamental problems in the defense of clients who may be mentally ill. After Theodore Kaczynski, the Unabomber, unsuccessfully sought on the eve of trial, in 1997, to fire his attorneys and defend himself, he decided to plead guilty and accept a life sentence—an option he had earlier refused—rather than permit them to attack his mental competency.

Moussaoui's attempt to plead guilty, at a procedural hearing on July 18th, came after Judge Brinkema objected to the defendant's insistence that he would not accept any documents, even exculpatory ones, from his former attorneys. As an accused terrorist, Moussaoui does not have the clearance to see any of the government's classified evidence against him—only his court-appointed attorneys could do so, on his behalf. "If you choose not to accept that information," the Judge told Moussaoui, "you proceed at your own risk and will not be allowed to complain down the road that you were denied a fair trial."

Faced with the prospect of having to work with the federal defenders, Moussaoui abruptly announced that he wanted to plead guilty. "You allow them to do this and to speak, and I will be soon removed from my defense," he told the Judge. "I will be certainly gagged during trial and you will carry on your so-called justice." One week later, after Judge Brinkema informed him that he could not, as he had assumed, plead guilty to the conspiracy charges and then argue in the penalty phase of the trial that he had had nothing to do with the September 11th attacks,



"I want it to look good, but not ill-gotten-gains good."

• •

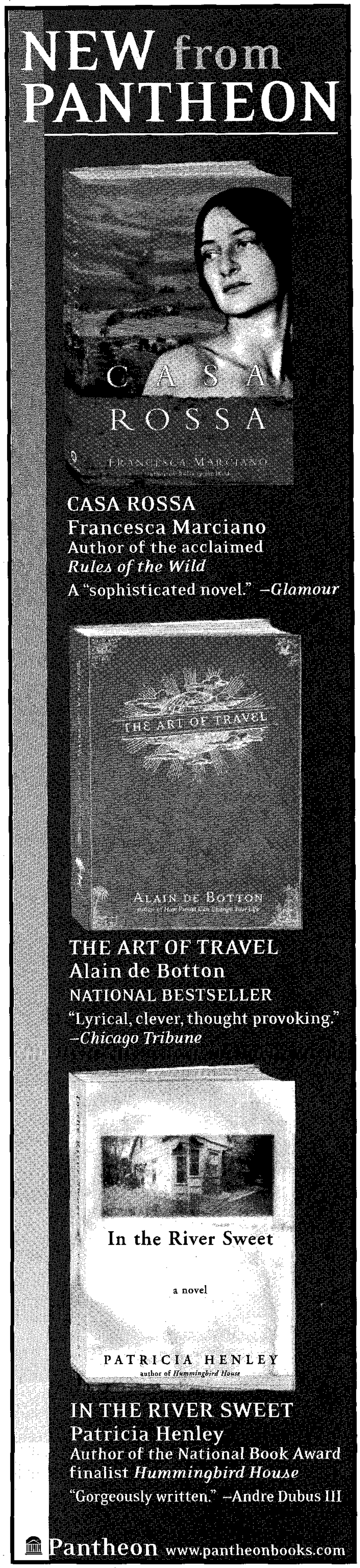
Moussaoui changed his mind. He had clearly failed to grasp that, as Judge Brinkema explained, "what you will not be able to do during the penalty phase of this trial is to come in and say that you were not . . . guilty of the offense." Moussaoui responded, "That's your—your interpretation!"

Moussaoui's confusion and inability to understand the consequences of a guilty plea prompted his attorneys once again to raise the question with Judge Brinkema of his competency to defend himself. In late July, Amador and Stejskal, the mental-health experts, told Judge Brinkema that they had observed "a marked deterioration in his mental state since he was permitted to proceed *pro se*." They went on:

> He is more preoccupied than ever with concerns that his lawyers are actively working toward his conviction and death. This paranoid preoccupation has resulted in repetitive accusations and demands that interfere with his ability to stay focused on substantive matters related to his defense. . . . We are now persuaded that the defendant's judgment and behavior are influenced *both* by disorganized thinking and delusions that derive from mental illness, *and* by paranoia.

Moussaoui's motions, they added, were filled with "repetitive ruminations" about the F.B.I., the C.I.A., and "SS Judge Brinkema." They wrote, "All but a handful are either focused entirely on these delusional fears, peppered with references and diatribes related to them, or repetitive charges and demands that reflect an inadequate understanding of the Court's previous rulings."

In August, Moussaoui responded with renewed rancor to the efforts of Frank Dunham and the other federal defenders on his behalf. He delivered a document to the Judge entitled "DUNHAM MIND YOUR OWN PIG BUZINESS." The goal of his motion, he wrote, was to "keep mad, out of control standby herd of blood suckers out of . . . PURE PRO SE LAND." At the same time, according to a memorandum filed by the standby attorneys, Moussaoui was refusing to forward to the Judge a series of vital pretrial motions, including one dealing with the suppression of government evidence. "At the center of the case is an individual who has been found competent to repre-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sent himself, is now representing himself, and who, in the language of the Court, 'does not comprehend significant aspects of federal criminal law,'" the federal defenders told the Judge. "This leads to his failure to file motions which he should file." In other words, their client, acting as his own attorney, was committing malpractice.

On August 16th, Brinkema granted a defense motion to delay the trial until January, but she has stuck to her decision to permit Moussaoui to defend himself. Two weeks later, however, the Judge, citing Moussaoui's "irrelevant, inflammatory, and insulting rhetoric," ordered the sealing of all future pleadings from him "containing threats, racial slurs, calls to action . . . or other irrelevant and inappropriate information." When news organizations protested, the prosecutors warned that Moussaoui was "presumably attempting to communicate" in code with Al Qaeda. Moussaoui's frenetic behavior in and out of court, one former public defender who has observed the case told me, "is providing ammunition for the military-tribunal crowd"—those who argue that civilian courts are not equal to the challenge of bringing international terrorists to justice. "It's just a meltdown presided over by an incurious judge who wants to get it moving."

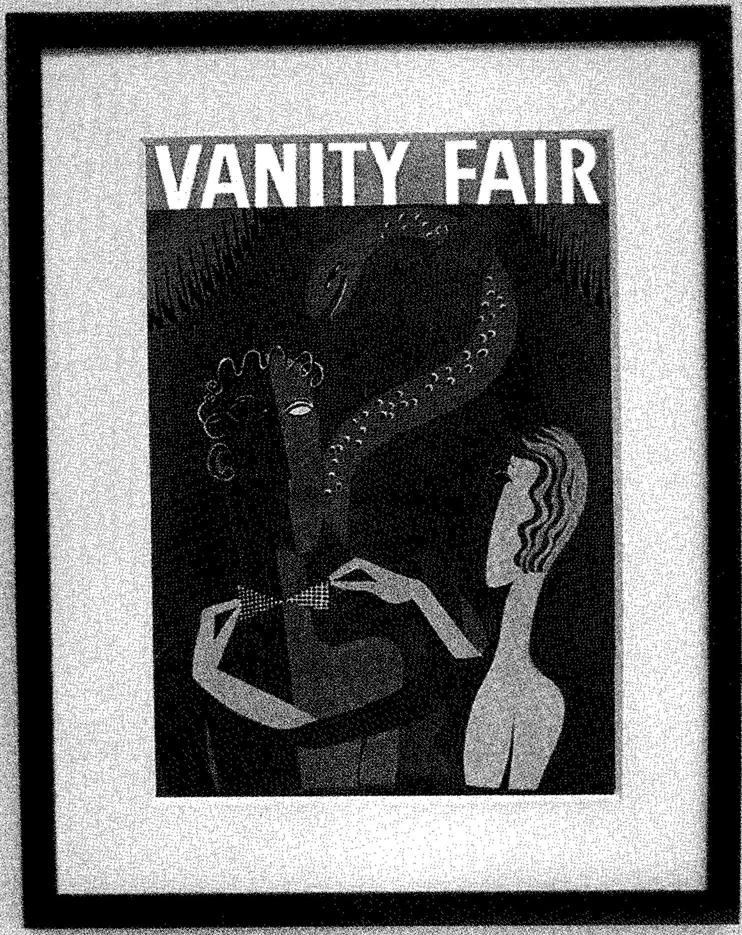
The Moussaoui case has also contributed to discontent within the F.B.I. over what some see as a politicized Justice Department more eager to have splashy court victories than to protect intelligence resources. One senior F.B.I. official noted, with obvious disdain, that the Justice Department attorneys wanted to use raw intelligence from sensitive, ongoing investigations to bolster otherwise flagging counterintelligence or counterterrorism criminal cases. "You'd make one case but lose thirty others," the official said. An intelligence official confirmed the dispute, and depicted the Bush Administration as still looking for "the right balance between the prosecution of crime, its prevention, and intelligence."

That balance, by all indications, has yet to be struck in the Moussaoui case. He remains the only man to be indicted in an American court for the deaths of some three thousand people. After a year of intensive work, the intelligence community has yet to uncover any support team that, many investigators believe, had to have helped the September 11th terrorists inside America. Moussaoui's lawyers, and some F.B.I. officials, remain bewildered at the government's failure to pursue a plea bargain. Frank Dunham, who was a federal prosecutor in northern Virginia before becoming a federal public defender, told me, "I've never been in a conspiracy case where the government wasn't interested in knowing if the defendant had any information—to see if there wasn't more to the conspiracy."

Any talks on a plea bargain would have hinged on Ashcroft's willingness to forgo the death penalty in return for coöperation, something several officials said he was unwilling to do. "We've been blocked by Justice," the senior F.B.I. official said. "It's very frustrating." Others who are familiar with the case believe that the government has simply overreached.

Moussaoui was certainly connected to Al Qaeda, but his real value to the United States may have been as a witness and not as a stand-in for the dead hijackers, who are beyond punishment. That potential appears to have been traded away for the sake of a high-profile prosecution that is politically and emotionally satisfying. Moussaoui's arrest, one former C.I.A. official told me, "was totally circumstantial. They cast a wide net and the guy happened to be a little fish who got caught up in it. They know it now. And nobody will back off."

"This man stands accused of one of the worst crimes committed on American soil," Martín Sabelli, a former federal public defender who has written on the *pro se* issue, told me. "This is precisely the kind of case where we must be most alert and most certain that the adversarial process actually involves adversaries—not Goliath on one side and a slingless David on the other. It appears that Moussaoui is not competent to represent himself, because he doesn't seem to understand the fundamentals of the charges against him, but I am starting to feel that the rest of us are crazier—that is, we are not competent to construct a legal system in which lives are in the balance. For all our expertise and professionalism, we may let this man talk himself to death to soothe our sense of vulnerability." ♦



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SHOUTS & MURMURS

THE ZAGAT HISTORY OF MY LAST RELATIONSHIP

BY NOAH BAUMBACH

ASE'S

Bring a "first date" to this "postage stamp"-size bistro. Tables are so close you're practically "sitting in the laps" of the couple next to you, but the lush décor is "the color of love." Discuss your respective "dysfunctional families" and tell her one of your "fail-safe" stories about your father's "cheapness" and you're certain to "get a laugh." After the "to die for" soufflés, expect a good-night kiss, but don't push for more, because if you play your cards right there's a second date "right around the corner."

BRASSERIE PENELOPE

"Ambience and then some" at this Jamaican-Norwegian hybrid. Service might be a "tad cool," but the warmth you feel when you gaze into her baby blues will more than compensate for it. Conversation is "spicier than the jerk chicken," and before you know it you'll be back at her one-bedroom in the East Village, quite possibly "getting lucky."

THE CHICK & HEN

Perfect for breakfast "after sleeping together," with "killer coffee" that will "help cure your seven-beer/three-aquavit hangover." Not that you need it—your "amplified high spirits" after having had sex for the first time in "eight months" should do the trick.

DESARCINA'S

So what if she thought the movie was "pretentious and contrived" and you felt it was a "masterpiece" and are dying to inform her that "she doesn't know what she's talking about"? Remember, you were looking for a woman who wouldn't "yes" you all the time. And after one bite of chef Leonard Desarcina's "duck manqué" and a sip of the "generous" gin Margaritas you'll start to see that she might have a point.

GORDY'S

Don't be ashamed if you don't know what wine to order with your seared minnow; the "incredibly knowledgeable" waiters will be more than pleased to assist. But if she makes fun of "the way you never make eye contact with people," you might turn "snappish" and end up having your first "serious fight," one where feelings are "hurt."

PANCHO MAO

"Bring your wallet," say admirers of Louis Grenouille's pan-Asian-Mexican-style fare, because it's "so expensive you'll start to wonder why she hasn't yet picked up a tab." The "celeb meter is high," and "Peter Jennings" at the table next to yours might spark an "inane political argument" where you find yourself "irrationally defending Enron" and finally saying aloud, "You don't know what you're talking about!" Don't let her "stuff herself," as she might use that as an excuse to go to sleep "without doing it."

RIGMAROLE

At this Wall Street old boys' club, don't be surprised if you run into one of her "ex-boyfriends" who works in "finance." Be prepared for his "power play," when he sends over a pitcher of "the freshest-tasting sangria this side of Barcelona," prompting her to visit his table for "ten minutes" and to come back "laughing" and suddenly critical of your "cravat." The room is "snug," to say the least, and it's not the best place to say, full voice, "What the fuck were you thinking dating him?" But don't overlook the "best paella in town" and a din "so loud" you won't notice that neither of you is saying anything.

TATI

Prices so "steep" you might feel you made a serious "career gaffe" by taking the "high road" and being an academic rather than "selling out" like "every other asshole she's gone out with." The "plush seats" come in handy if she's forty-five minutes late and arrives looking a little "preoccupied" and wearing "a sly smile."

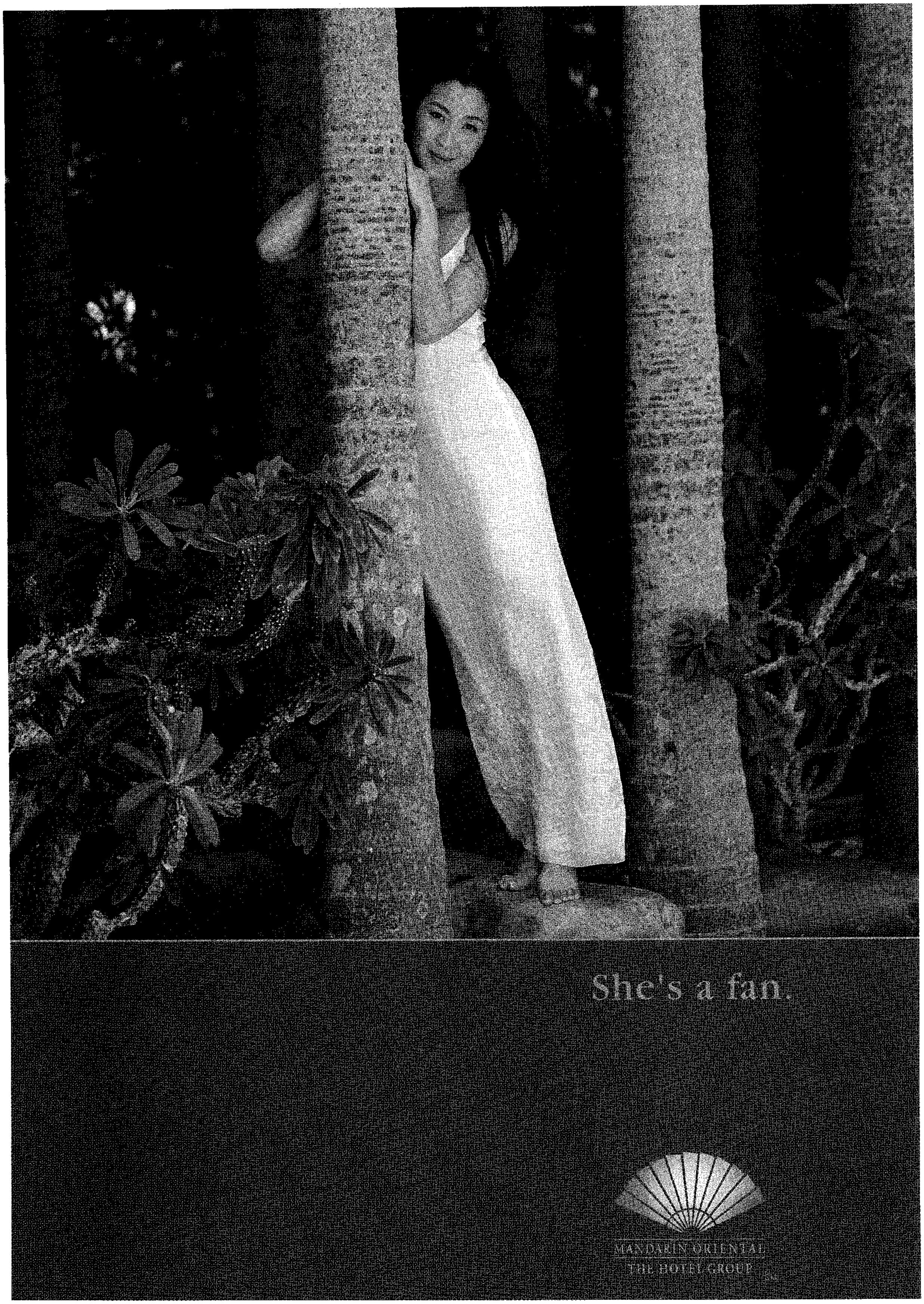
VANDERWEI'S

Be careful not to combine "four dry *sakes*" with your "creeping feeling of insecurity and dread," or you might find yourself saying, "Wipe that damn grin off your face!" The bathrooms are "big and glamorous," so you won't mind spending an hour with your cheek pressed against the "cool tiled floor" after she "walks out." And the hip East Village location can't be beat, since her apartment is "within walking distance," which makes it very convenient if you should choose to "lean on her buzzer for an hour" until she calls "the cops."

ZACHARIA AND SONS & CO.

This "out of the way," "dirt cheap," "near impossible to find," "innocuous" diner is ideal for "eating solo" and insuring that you "won't run into your ex, who has gone back to the bond trader." The "mediocre at best" burgers and "soggy fries" will make you wish you "never existed" and wonder why you're so "frustrated with your life" and unable to sustain a "normal," "healthy" "relationship." ♦

FILIP PAGOWSKI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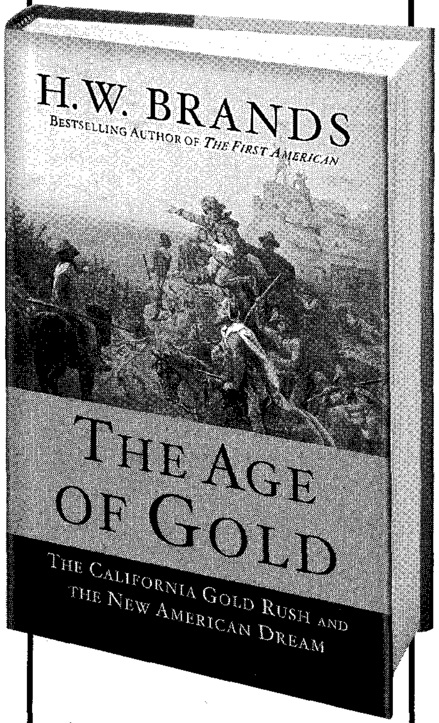
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NEW YORK JOURNAL

BUMPING INTO MR. RAVIOLI

A theory of busyness, and its hero.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

My daughter Olivia, who just turned three, has an imaginary friend whose name is Charlie Ravioli. Olivia is growing up in Manhattan, and so Charlie Ravioli has a lot of local traits: he lives in an apartment "on Madison and Lexington," he dines on grilled chicken, fruit, and water, and, having reached the age of seven and a half, he feels, or is thought, "old." But the most peculiarly local thing about Olivia's imaginary playmate is this: he is always too busy to play with her. She holds her toy cell phone up to her ear, and we hear her talk into it: "Ravioli? It's Olivia . . . It's Olivia. Come and play? O.K. Call me. Bye." Then she snaps it shut, and shakes her head. "I always get his machine," she says. Or she will say, "I spoke to Ravioli today." "Did you have fun?" my wife and I ask. "No. He was busy working. On a television" (leaving it up in the air if he repairs electronic devices or has his own talk show).

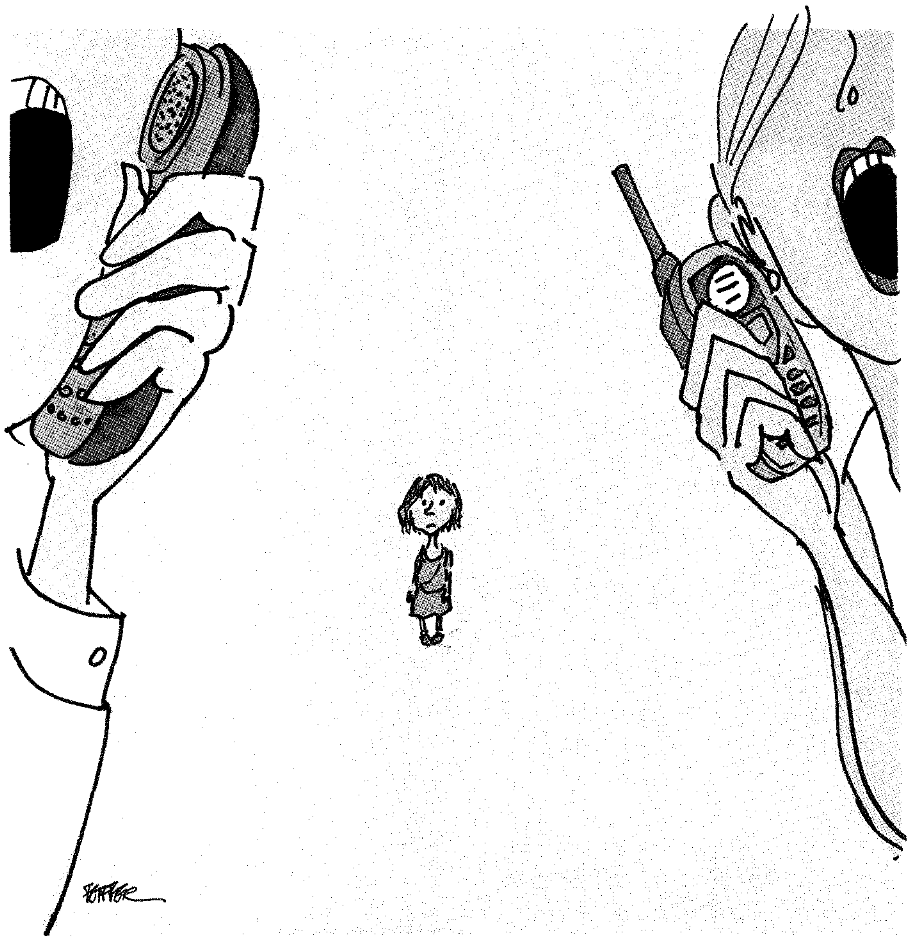
On a good day, she "bumps into" her invisible friend and they go to a coffee shop. "I bumped into Charlie Ravioli," she announces at dinner (after a day when, of course, she stayed home, played, had a nap, had lunch, paid a visit to the Central Park Zoo, and then had another nap). "We had coffee, but then he had to run." She sighs, sometimes, at her inability to make their schedules mesh, but she accepts it as inevitable, just the way life is. "I bumped into Charlie Ravioli today," she says. "He was working." Then she adds brightly, "But we hopped into a taxi." What happened then? we ask. "We grabbed lunch," she says.

It seemed obvious that Ravioli was a romantic figure of the big exotic life that went on outside her little limited life of parks and playgrounds—drawn, in particular, from a nearly perfect, mynah-bird-like imitation of the words she hears her mother use when she talks about *her* day with *her* friends. ("How was your day?" Sighing: "Oh, you know. I tried to make a date with Meg, but I couldn't find her, so I left a message on her machine. Then I bumped into Emily after that meeting I had in SoHo, and we had coffee and then she had to run, but by then Meg had reached me on my cell and we arranged . . .") I was concerned, though, that Charlie Ravioli might also be the sign of some "trauma," some loneliness in Olivia's life reflected in imaginary form. "It seems odd to have an imaginary playmate who's always too busy to play with you," Martha, my wife, said to me. "Shouldn't your imaginary playmate be someone you tell secrets to and, I don't know, sing songs with? It shouldn't be someone who's always *hopping* into taxis."

We thought, at first, that her older brother Luke might be the original of Charlie Ravioli. (For one thing, he is also seven and a half, though we were fairly sure that this age was merely Olivia's marker for As Old as Man Can Be.) He *is* too busy to play with her much anymore. He has become a true New York child, with the schedule of a Cabinet secretary: chess club on Monday, T-ball on Tuesday, tournament on Saturday, play dates and after-school conferences to fill in the gaps. But Olivia, though she counts days, does not yet really *have* days. She has *a* day, and into this day she has introduced the figure of Charlie Ravioli—in order, it dawned on us, to insist that she does have days, because she is too harried to share them, that she does have an independent social life, by virtue of being too busy to have one.

Yet Charlie Ravioli was becoming so constant and oddly discouraging a companion—"He cancelled lunch. Again," Olivia would say—that we thought we ought to look into it. One of my sisters is a developmental psychologist who specializes in close scientific studies of what goes on inside the heads of one- and two- and three-year-olds. Though she grew up in the nervy East, she lives in California now, where she grows basil in her garden and jars her own organic marmalades. I e-mailed this sister for help with the Ravioli issue—how concerned should we be?—and she sent me back an e-mail, along with an attachment, and, after several failed cell-phone connections, we at last spoke on a land line.

It turned out that there is a recent book on this very subject by the psychologist Marjorie Taylor, called "Imaginary Companions and the Children Who Create Them," and my sister had just written a review of it. She insisted that Charlie Ravioli was nothing to be worried about. Olivia was right on target, in fact. Most under-sevens (sixty-three per cent, to be scientific) have an invisible friend, and children create their imaginary playmates not out of trauma but out of a serene sense of the possibilities of fiction—sometimes as figures of pure fantasy, sometimes, as Olivia had done, as observations of grownup manners assembled in tranquillity and given a name. I learned about the invisible companions Taylor studied: Baintor, who is invisible because he lives in the light; Station Pheta, who hunts sea anemones on the beach. Charlie Ravioli seemed pavement-bound by comparison.



We hop into taxis and leave messages on machines and keep missing our friends.

JULES FEIFFER

"An imaginary playmate isn't any kind of trauma-marker," my sister said. "It's just the opposite: it's a sign that the child is now confident enough to begin to understand how to organize her experience into stories." The significant thing about imaginary friends, she went on, is that the kids know they're fictional. In an instant message on AOL, she summed it up: "The children with invisible friends often interrupted the interviewer to remind her, with a certain note of concern for her sanity, that these characters were, after all, just pretend."

I also learned that some children, as they get older, turn out to possess what child psychologists call a "paracosm." A paracosm is a society thought up by a child—an invented universe with a distinctive language, geography, and history. (The Brontës invented a couple of paracosms when they were children.) Not all children who have an imaginary friend invent a paracosm, but the two might, I think, be related. Like a lonely ambassador from Alpha Centauri in a fifties sci-fi movie who, misunderstood by paranoid earth scientists, cannot bring the life-saving news from his planet, perhaps the invisible friend also gets an indifferent or hostile response, and then we never find out about the beautiful paracosm he comes from.

"Don't worry about it," my sister said in a late-night phone call. "Knowing something's made up while thinking that it matters is what all fiction insists on. She's putting a name on a series of manners."

"But he seems so real to her," I objected.

"Of course he is. I mean, who's more real to you, Becky Sharp or Gandalf or the guy down the hall? Giving a manner a name makes it real."

I paused. "I grasp that it's normal for her to have an imaginary friend," I said, "but have you ever heard of an imaginary friend who's too busy to play with you?"

She thought about it. "No," she said. "I'm sure that doesn't occur anywhere in the research literature. That sounds *completely* New York." And then she hung up.

The real question, I saw, was not "Why this friend?" but "Why this fiction?" Why, as Olivia had seen so clearly, are grownups in New York so busy, and so obsessed with the language of busyness that it dominates their conversation? Why are New Yorkers always bumping into Charlie Ravioli and grabbing lunch, instead of sitting down with him and exchanging intimacies, as friends should, as people do in Paris and Rome? Why is busyness the stuff our children make their invisible friends from, as country children make theirs from light and sand?

This seems like an odd question. New Yorkers are busy for obvious reasons: they have husbands and wives and careers and children, they have the Gauguin show to see and their personal trainers and accountants to visit. But the more I think about this the more I think it is—well, a lot of Ravioli. We are instructed to believe that we are busier because we have to work harder to be more productive, but everybody knows that busyness and productivity have a dubious, arm's-length relationship. Most of our struggle in New York, in fact, is to be less busy in order to do more work.

Constant, exhausting, no-time-to-meet-your-friends Charlie Ravioli-style busyness arrived as an affliction in modern life long after the other parts of bourgeois city manners did. Business long predates busyness. In the seventeenth and eigh-

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RETURN TO ACHZIV

Every year we come back here, to Achziv,
every year at this appointed time, as in the Bible, we
return to the house where we were together years back, the house destroyed
entirely, and in its place a lovely field of grass above the shoreline. But we
return to the house and still go up the stairs, our legs in motion,
and we duck our heads to keep from hitting the low lintel
that is not there, the bowing and the bending of the heads like a wondrous ceremony.
This, too, is the beginning of a new religion.

—*Yehuda Amichai*

(*Translated, from the Hebrew, by Bernard Horn.*)

teenth centuries, when bourgeois people were building the institutions of bourgeois life, they seem never to have complained that they were too busy—or, if they did, they left no record of it. Samuel Pepys, who had a Navy to refloat and a burned London to rebuild, often uses the word "busy" but never complains of busyness. For him, the word "busy" is a synonym for "happy," not for "stressed." Not once in his diary does Pepys cancel lunch or struggle to fit someone in for coffee at four-thirty. Pepys works, makes love, and goes to bed, but he does not bump and he does not have to run. Ben Franklin, a half century later, boasts of his industriousness, but he, too, never complains about being busy, and always has time to publish a newspaper or come up with a maxim or swim the ocean or invent the lightning rod.

Until sometime in the middle of the nineteenth century, in fact, the normal affliction of the bourgeois was not busyness at all but its apparent opposite: boredom. It has even been argued that the grid of streets and cafés and small engagements in the nineteenth-century city—the whole of social life—was designed self-consciously as an escape from that numbing boredom. (Working people weren't bored, of course, but they were engaged in labor, not work. They were too busy to be busy.) Baudelaire, basically, was so bored that he had to get drunk and run out onto the boulevard in the hope of bumping into somebody.

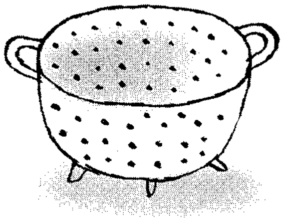
Turn to the last third of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, though, and suddenly everybody is busy, and everybody is complaining about it. Pepys, master of His Majesty's Navy, may never have complained of busyness, but Virginia Woolf, mistress of motionless lull, is continually complaining about how she spends her days racing across London from square to square, just like—well, like Charlie Ravioli. Ronald Firbank is wrung out by his social obligations; Proust is constantly rescheduling rendezvous and apologizing for being overstretched. Henry James, with nothing particular to do save live, complains of being too busy all the time. He could not shake the world of obligation, he said, and he wrote a strange and beautiful story, "The Great Good Place," which begins with an exhausting flood of correspondence, telegrams, and manuscripts that drive the protagonist nearly mad.

What changed? That James story helps supply the key. It was trains and telegrams. The railroads ended isolation, and packed the metropolis with people whose work was defined by a complicated network of social obligations. Pepys's network in 1669 London was, despite his official position, relatively small compared even with that of a minor aesthete like Firbank, two centuries later. Pepys had more time to make love because he had fewer friends to answer.

If the train crowded our streets, the telegram crowded our minds. It introduced something into the world which remains with us today: a whole new class of communications that are defined as incomplete in advance of their delivery. A letter, though it may enjoin a response, is meant to be complete in itself. Neither the Apostle Paul nor Horace Walpole ever ends an epistle with "Give me a call and let's discuss." By contrast, it is in the nature of the telegram to be a skeletal version of another thing—a communication that opens more than it closes. The nineteenth-century telegram came with those busy-threatening words "Letter follows."

Every device that has evolved from the telegram shares the same character. E-mails end with a suggestion for a phone call ("Anyway, let's meet and/or talk soon"), faxes with a request for an e-mail, answering-machine messages with a request for a fax. All are devices of perpetually suspended communication. My wife recalls a moment last fall when she got a telephone message from a friend asking her to check her e-mail apropos a phone call she needed to make vis-à-vis a fax they had both received asking for more information about a bed they were thinking of buying from Ireland online and having sent to America by Federal Express—a grand slam of incomplete communication.

In most of the Western world outside New York, the press of trains and of telegraphic communication was alleviated by those other two great transformers: the car and the television. While the train and the telegram (and their love children, subways and commuter trains and e-mail) pushed people together, the car and the television pulled people apart—taking them out to the suburbs and sitting them down in front of a solo spectacle. New York, though, almost uniquely, got hit by a double dose of the first two technologies, and a very limited dose of the second two. Car life—car obsessions, car-defined habits—is more absent here than almost anywhere else in the country, while television, though obviously present, is less fatally prevalent here. New York is still a subject of television, and we compare "Sex and the City" to sex and the city; they are not yet quite the same. Here two grids of busyness remain dominant: the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century grid of bump and run, and the late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century postmodern grid of virtual call and echo. Busyness is felt so intently here because we are both crowded and overloaded. We exit the apartment into a still dense nineteenth-century grid of street corners and restaurants full of people, and come home to the late-twentieth-century grid of faxes and e-mails and overwhelming incompleteness.



We walk across the Park on a Sunday morning and bump into our friend the baker and our old acquaintance from graduate school (what the hell is she doing now?) and someone we have been avoiding for three weeks. They all invite us for brunch, and we would love to, but we are too . . . busy. We bump into Charlie Ravioli, and grab a coffee with him—and come home to find three e-mails and a message on our cell phone from him, wondering where we are. The crowding of our space has been reinforced by a crowding of our time, and the only way to protect ourselves is to build structures of perpetual deferral: I'll see you next week, let's talk soon. We build rhetorical baffles around our lives to keep the crowding out, only to find that we have let nobody we love in.

Like Charlie Ravioli, we hop into taxis and leave messages on answering machines to avoid our acquaintances, and find that we keep missing our friends. I have one intimate who lives just across the Park from me, whom I e-mail often, and whom I am fortunate to see two or three times a year. We are always . . . busy. He has become my Charlie Ravioli, my invisible friend. I am sure that he misses me—just as Charlie Ravioli, I realized, must tell his other friends that he is sorry he does not see Olivia more often.

Once I sensed the nature of his predicament, I began to feel more sympathetic toward Charlie Ravioli. I got to know him better, too. We learned more about what Ravioli did in the brief breathing spaces in his busy life when he could sit down with Olivia and dish. "Ravioli read your book," Olivia announced, for instance, one night at dinner. "He didn't like it much." We also found out that Ravioli had joined a gym, that he was going to the beach in the summer, but he was too busy, and that he was working on a "show." ("It isn't a very

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good show," she added candidly.) Charlie Ravioli, in other words, was just another New Yorker: fit, opinionated, and trying to break into show business.

I think we would have learned to live happily with Charlie Ravioli had it not been for the appearance of Laurie. She threw us badly. At dinner, Olivia had been mentioning a new personage almost as often as she mentioned Ravioli. "I talked to Laurie today," she would begin. "She says Ravioli is busy." Or she would be closeted with her play phone. "Who are you talking to, darling?" I would ask. "Laurie," she would say. "We're talking about Ravioli." We surmised that Laurie was, so to speak, the Linda Tripp of the Ravioli operation—the person you spoke to for consolation when the big creep was ignoring you.

But a little while later a more ominous side of Laurie's role began to appear. "Laurie, tell Ravioli I'm calling," I heard Olivia say. I pressed her about who, exactly, Laurie was. Olivia shook her head. "She works for Ravioli," she said.

And then it came to us, with sickening clarity: Laurie was not the patient friend who consoled you for Charlie's absence. Laurie was the bright-toned person who answered Ravioli's phone and told you that unfortunately Mr. Ravioli was in a meeting. "Laurie says Ravioli is too busy to play," Olivia announced sadly one morning. Things seemed to be deteriorating; now Ravioli was too busy even to say he was too busy.

I got back on the phone with my sister. "Have you ever heard of an imaginary friend with an assistant?" I asked.

She paused. "Imaginary friends don't have assistants," she said. "That's not only not in the literature. That's just . . . I mean—in California they don't have assistants."

"You think we should look into it?"

"I think you should move," she said flatly.

Martha was of the same mind. "An imaginary playmate shouldn't have an assistant," she said miserably. "An imaginary playmate shouldn't have an agent. An imaginary playmate shouldn't have a publicist or a personal trainer or a caterer—an imaginary playmate shouldn't have . . . *people*. An imaginary playmate should just *play*. With the child who imagined it." She started leaving on my pillow real-estate brochures picturing quaint houses in New Jersey and Connecticut, unhaunted by busy invisible friends and their entourages.

Not long after the appearance of Laurie, though, something remarkable happened. Olivia would begin to tell us tales of her frustrations with Charlie Ravioli, and, after telling us, again, that he was too busy to play, she would tell us what she had done instead. Astounding and paracosmic tall tales poured out of her: she had been to a chess tournament and brought home a trophy; she had gone to a circus and told jokes. Searching for Charlie Ravioli, she had "saved all the animals in the zoo"; heading home in a taxi after a quick coffee with Ravioli, she took over the steering wheel and "got all the moneys." From the stalemate of daily life emerged the fantasy of victory. She had dreamed of a normal life with a few close friends, and had to settle for worldwide fame and the front page of the tabloids. The existence of an imaginary friend had liberated her into a paracosm, but it was a curiously New York paracosm—it was the unobtainable world outside her window. Charlie Ravioli, prince of busyness, was not an end but a means: a way out onto the street in her head, a declaration of potential independence.

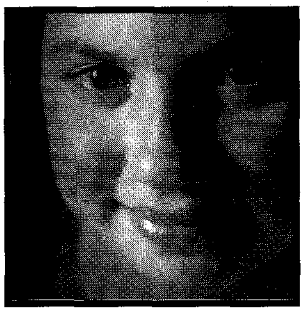
Busyness is our art form, our civic ritual, our way of being us. Many friends have said to me that they love New York now in a way they never did before, and their love, I've noticed, takes for its object all the things that used to exasperate them—the curious combination of freedom, self-made fences, and paralyzing preoccupation that the city provides. "How did you spend the day?" Martha and I now ask each other, and then, instead of listing her incidents, she says merely, "Oh, you know . . . just . . . bumping into Charlie Ravioli," meaning, just bouncing from obligation to electronic entreaty, just spotting a friend and snatching a sandwich, just being busy, just living in New York. If everything we've learned in the past year could be summed up in a phrase, it's that we want to go on bumping into Charlie Ravioli for as long as we can.

Olivia still hopes to have him to herself someday. As I work late at night in the "study" (an old hallway, an Aalto screen) I keep near the "nursery" (an ancient pantry, a glass-brick wall), I can hear her shift into pre-sleep, still muttering to herself. She is still trying to reach her closest friend. "Ravioli? Ravioli?" she moans as she turns over into her pillow and clutches her blanket, and then she whispers, almost to herself, "Tell him call me. Tell him call me when he comes home." ♦

Victoria Roberts

"A MacArthur, the lecture circuit, and thou!"

Your blood.



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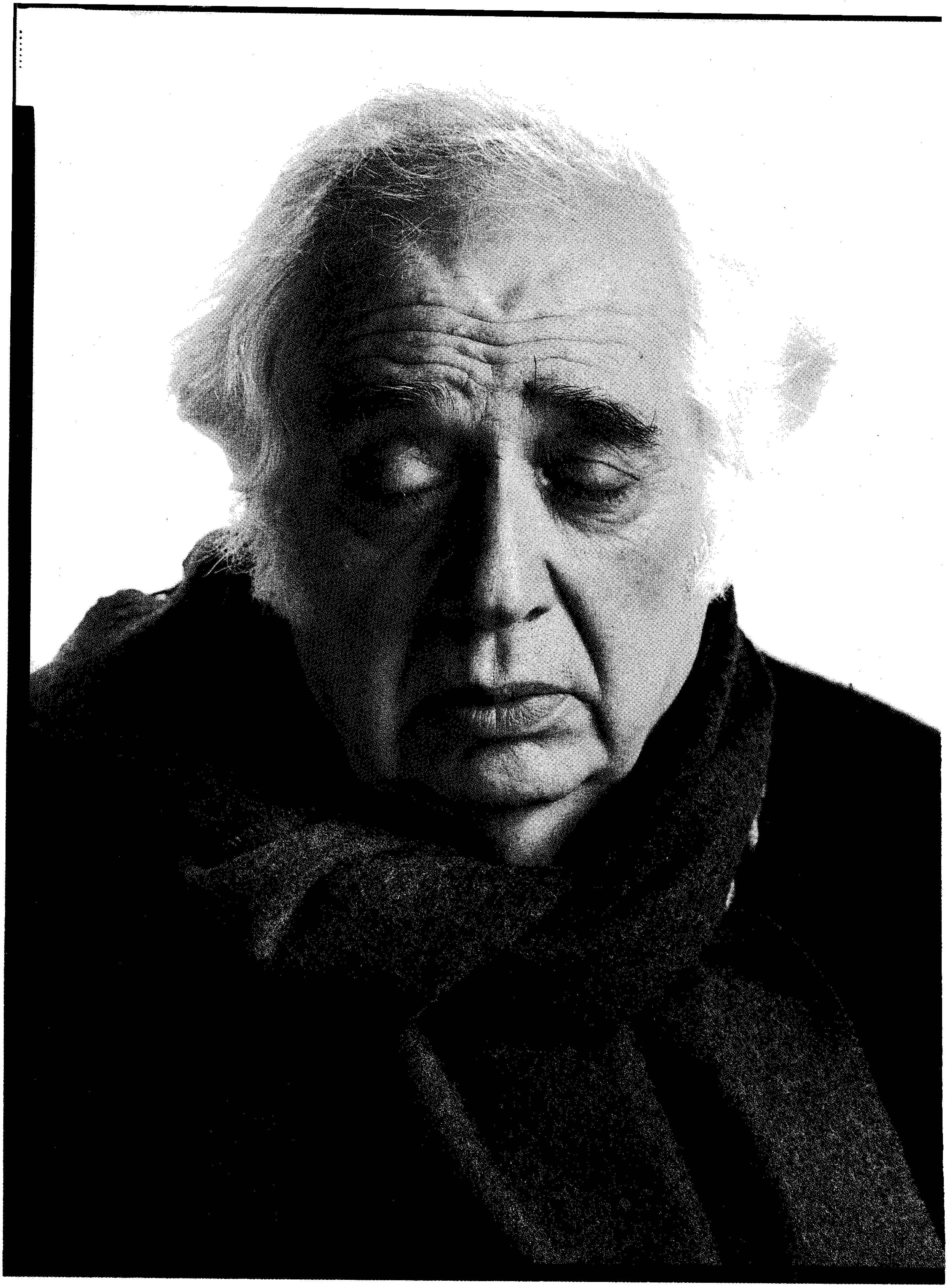

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THE PROPHET OF DECLINE

Harold Bloom's influential anxieties.

BY LARISSA MACFARQUHAR

It is tempting to say that Harold Bloom is a man marooned in the wrong place and time, and that living out his late years in twenty-first-century America is what's making him miserable. It is so easy, after all, to imagine him gleefully roistering through taverns like his Shakespearean hero, Falstaff, constructing a tottering folly of puns; or denouncing Aristotelian aesthetics at some bacchanal in Rome (although the thought of Bloom in tights or a toga is alarming). One can picture him a feverish poet in nineteenth-century Russia, growing dotty and millennial like the elder Tolstoy. "He's a wandering Jewish scholar from the first century," Sir Frank Kermode, the English literary critic, says. "There's always a pack of people sitting around him to see if any bread or fishes are going to be handed out. And I think there is in him a lurking sense that when the true messiah comes he will be very like Harold."

But to think this way is to make two mistakes. One is to suppose that mere history—a change of scene—can alter a spirit. That is a very un-Bloomian notion. And the second is to believe that miserable is a bad thing to be. Bloom, in his lyric sadness, his grandiloquent fatigue, and his messianic loneliness, is a great soul. "He did not seem happy," a former student says. "But happiness seemed a trivial quality compared to whatever Harold was." Bloom is not low so much as over the top. In his misery, he is magnificent.

Bloom is a prophet of decline. In his view, Western literature reached its apogee in Shakespeare, and it has been downhill ever since. Bloom loves Emerson and Whitman but he doesn't believe them: to him, belatedness is now a permanent condition of man, and there can be no overcoming it—no return, even in America, to an original fullness or freshness or purity of spirit. But it would not be right to say that Bloom is nostalgic for the past. Unlike the cultural conservatives with whom he is often (wrongly) grouped, he does not long for a more genteel or simpler era. In his view, the fact that Shakespeare lived in sixteenth-century England does no credit to the time or the place, because Shakespeare's genius was sui generis—it emerged out of nowhere. The truth is, Bloom has no interest in history as such—no interest, that is, in the difference between one time and another—because to him all poetry that is valuable is timeless. Anything that time has made foreign is a period piece, bric-a-brac.

In fact, it's not just historicizing that Bloom rejects—it's pastness per se. He reads poems as though reliving their creation. Bloom likes his poems bloody, trailing ruptured veins and muscles torn in struggle. It is the lyric urge and the strife of poetic parturition that he values, more than the poem itself. For the epigraph of his book "Shakespeare," Bloom chose a quotation from Nietzsche's "Twilight of the Idols" that is an extraordinary statement to place at the beginning of a book about Shakespeare, or, indeed, about any sort of literature: "That for which we find words is something already dead in our hearts. There is always a kind of contempt in the act of speaking."

Bloom is a literary critic at Yale and New York University, an authority on the Romantic poets and on Yeats and Wallace Stevens. He is the author of "The Anxiety of Influence" and, more recently, of best-selling books such as "The Western Canon," "The Book of J," and "How to Read and Why." Next month, he publishes his twenty-eighth

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

Harold Bloom, October 28, 2001, New York City.

book, eight hundred pages long, titled "Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Minds." Despite these critical credentials, however, Bloom is not, for the most part, a close reader. He doesn't dissect stanzas, he doesn't worry words, because he doesn't read the way most people do. Bloom is famous for his memory and his reading speed. He has memorized a large proportion of canonical poetry written in English; once, when drunk, as an undergraduate at Cornell, he recited Hart Crane's long poem "The Bridge" backward, word by word. He claims that in his youth he read a thousand pages an hour. Bloom has had poems inside him for so long that he doesn't really *read* them anymore. They are not a series of lines following one after the other—they exist in him all at once. He has swallowed them whole.

Bloom, sitting, temporarily unattended, somewhere unfamiliar. He sits with his arms hugged around himself, head sunk, blinking miserably, in the posture of one who is obliged to wait in the rain without an umbrella or hope of shelter. From time to time, he hunches his shoulders and twists with a pained expression, as though trying to shift something heavy on his back.

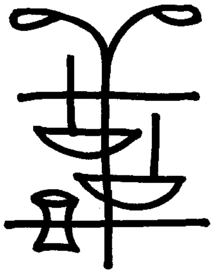
Bloom's face is a cluster of big, swollen, sensing instruments: a heroic nose, nostrils dilating; plump, colossal lips; a giant's heavy eyes, rolling or tearing; thick, congested eyebrows, heaving up or thrusting down; deep fissures in the forehead. There is no mere skin on his face—it is all membrane. Bloom is an intensely sensitive animal, vulnerable to the most delicate waft of emotion. His stomach is prodigious, like a great cathedral, in which all the uncountable poems and plays that he has swallowed roil and commingle with his own passions. Bloom has suffered heart attacks and stomach ulcers and is intermittently, and with tepid conviction, on a diet. But his Falstaffian fat is part of his majesty.

When Bloom teaches, he uncoils and grows even larger. He seems to his students not quite in control of himself: he gets carried away, he throws himself around, he slips his hand inside his shirt and grasps his chest, he quivers with feeling. He is a superb spectacle. He worships, he adores, he falls at a poet's feet, but not deferentially—*intimately.* He is rabbinical, prophetic; but he is also, in his bigness and his emotion, like a giant mother. He is disarmingly feminine: his voice, emerging out of the roomy torso, is a gentle tenor. A number of his female students find the combination of these qualities overwhelmingly, destructively, seductive.

Some of Bloom's students form a kind of Orphic cult about him. They become preoccupied with him, and spend hours engaged in awed or prurient speculation. Absurd rumors circulate. It is whispered that, using his astonishing memory, he worked as a document courier, in the nineteen-fifties, for the Israeli government. A small scar on his forehead is suspected to be the mark of a bullet wound he suffered in Palestine in the 1948 war. He was said to be the best-selling romance author Harold Robbins, writing under a pseudonym.

Women students go early to class in order to secure a seat next to him. "I suppose he was already on his way to Wordsworth's egotistical sublime," one former student says. "There was always something exciting about the way he staged that sense that he had some enormous thing inside him, some huge soul or being that's too big for this world and his body. But his teaching seemed crushing to me. You weren't encouraged to think on your own. He was the sow who rolls over and kills her young." "I really feel I am a different person for having studied with Bloom," another student says. "He changed the scale of my ambition: he showed me that there was a moral righteousness in reading. He made me *feel* it." "I had the most intense castration dream of my life after one of his classes," says a third, a woman. "I dreamed that I had a dotted line for cutting drawn across my neck."

Many of Bloom's students love him; others grow up to become feminists and Marxists and New Historicists, and reject everything he taught them. Bloom is Falstaff; but Falstaff was betrayed by only one Hal. Bloom is betrayed by thousands.



Every year, Bloom is invited to Europe, to receive a prize, or to give a lecture, or for some other reason. Every year, he accepts, and then, every year at the end of the journey, he vows never to travel again. This year, on a radiant afternoon in late spring, Bloom boarded a ferry from Barcelona to Majorca.

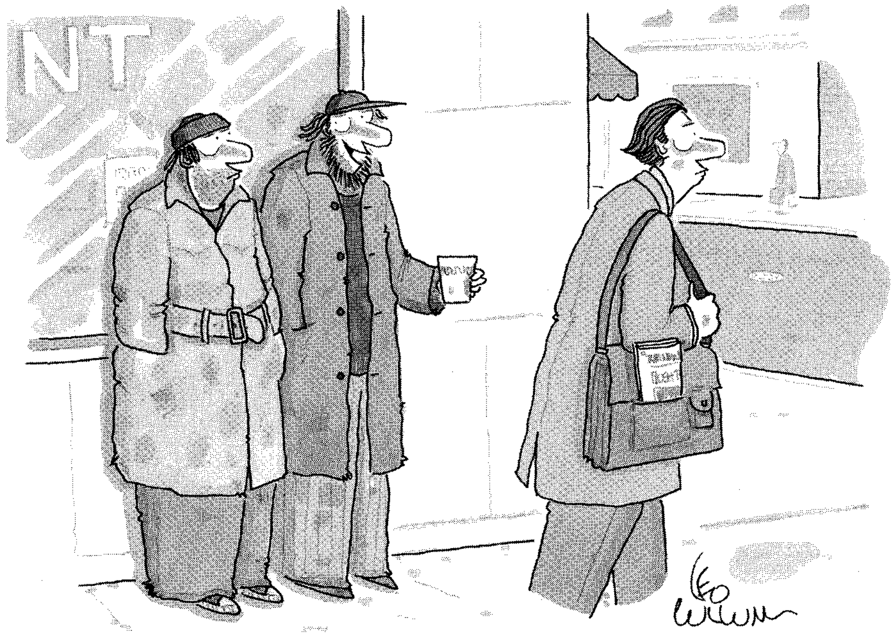
Some months previously, he had been approached by a man named Michaelangelo, a Spanish psychoanalyst who practices in London and is a passionate Borges enthusiast. With the aid of a wealthy local lady, Michaelangelo had established a Majorcan Borges society and had invited Bloom to speak at a society dinner. Bloom had accepted the invitation because he was planning to be in Spain anyway: he had been summoned to Barcelona to receive the Premi Internacional Catalunya—the Catalan equivalent, he was told, of the Nobel.

Upon his arrival in Barcelona, Bloom had been reminded, earlier than usual, of his previous year's vow. He had discovered that his acceptance of the prize obliged him to submit to two and a half days of interviews, so that by the time he departed for the ferry he was utterly exhausted. In the car on the way to the dock, Bloom's wife, Jeanne, chatted with the driver about Snowflake, the famous albino gorilla who lives in the Barcelona zoo. Jeanne had read in the newspaper that specialists at the zoo had been breeding him over and over again in the (vain) hope that he would produce an albino heir, even though Snowflake was now quite elderly, and the constant fornication had left him visibly depleted. "Let us change the subject, please," Bloom entreated weakly from the front seat. "I am beginning to identify with him."

The ferry ride, at least, was something to look forward to. Bloom had been told by an American friend that travelling by boat between Barcelona and Majorca was a beautiful passage, the water as smooth as a sea of glass. Bloom had been taken with this phrase, "sea of glass," and during the dark days of interviews he had pictured himself sitting on a sunny deck, as peacefully and solidly as if he were seated on a stage while a painted background of sea and sky scrolled by behind him.

Bloom walked very slowly from the car to the boat. At every step, he moaned softly. Bloom is now seventy-two, and he has taken a semester off from teaching for health reasons, but he has behaved like a man on the point of death since he was in his thirties. "Oh Bloom, Bloom, Bloom," he sighed. Jeanne, wearing the voluminous blue skirt and white polo shirt she sets aside for travelling, strode ahead onto the dock, carrying the hand luggage and peering up at the sun through her large glasses.

Alas, Bloom's friend proved to have been mistaken. Although the weather appeared calm, gradually, mysteriously, the ship began to roll. Spray spattered the windows. Bloom watched apprehensively as passengers standing out on deck, smoking, began to totter about. He heard a distant crash from the second-class section as something fell to the floor. The sky darkened, and the ship began to pitch more violently.



"I think the economy's turning around. That guy looked as if he were about to give me something."

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At a certain point, Bloom was obliged to answer the call of nature. He rose, clinging fiercely to his chair, which was, thank God, bolted to the floor. He plunged toward the next chair, grabbed it with both hands, and paused to catch his breath. He measured how far he had still to go. There were twenty chairs at least between him and the men's room, and he realized with horror that a single failure of balance could send him crashing to the floor to break a limb or, very likely, worse. Bracing himself, he lurched wildly toward the next chair, found his grip, and, breathing heavily, hung on. It was a hard four-hour crossing to Majorca, and it was an ashen and traumatized Bloom who emerged, trembling, onto the gangplank. For days afterward, he recalled this voyage in appalled jeremiads, and an account of it appeared in at least one of the local papers.

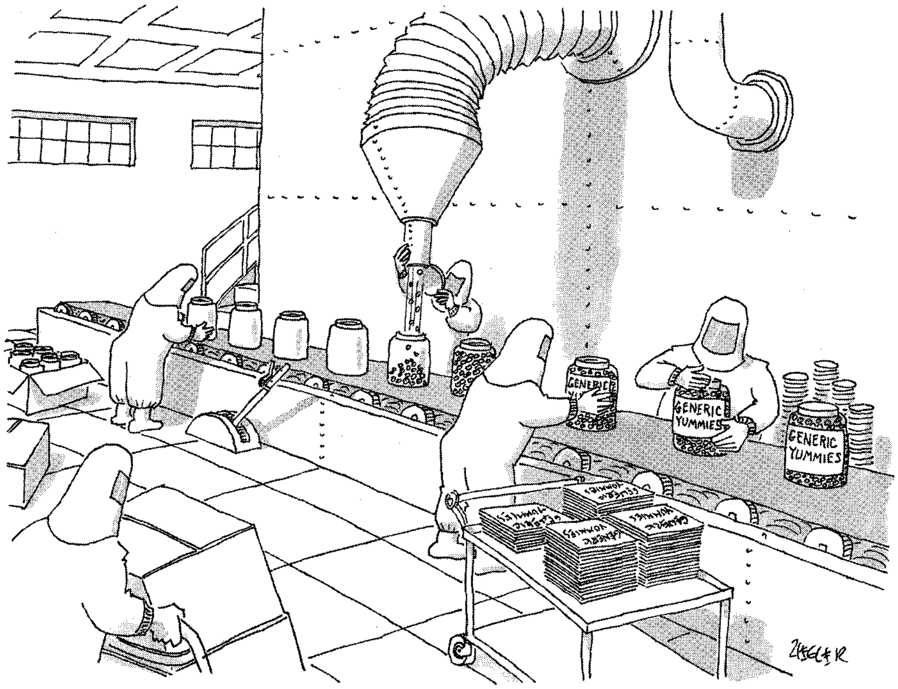
In the early nineteen-fifties, when Bloom was in graduate school at Yale, the atmosphere in the English department was very High Church and stiff. Bloom was big and messy and emotional and, in a department whose Anglophilia often functioned as a genteel form of anti-Semitism, Jewish. Students wore jackets and ties to class. Bloom slumped around in an old Russian leather coat he had inherited, a pair of fisherman's trousers, and, on one unfortunate occasion, his pajamas.

The department was still very much under the influence of T. S. Eliot, and this meant, among other things, a disdain for Romanticism. Shelley in particular was considered by the Eliot school rather uncontrolled and adolescent, and Blake, with his mythological obsessions, was thought to be a borderline lunatic. In Bloom's view, however, Eliot's classicism was a kind of desiccated, cerebral discipline entirely foreign to what he valued about poetry. He had grown up loving Shelley and Blake. He set out to revive first the one and then the other.

Eliot, in delineating what he considered to be the Western canon, had revived the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century and concluded with the twentieth-century poets he considered the metaphysical poets' true heirs, such as Pound, the late Yeats, and Eliot himself. To Eliot, Romanticism was a regrettable but thankfully finite episode that could be separated quite cleanly from the rest of literary history. Bloom turns this theory upside down: he argues that the Romantic was invented by Shakespeare, in the character of Hamlet, and was refined by Milton, in the figure of Satan. And poetry ever since, Bloom claims, has been a form of Romanticism, whether orthodox or in rebellion against it.

Bloom was not the only one engaged in Romantic revivalism. His undergraduate mentor, M. H. Abrams, wrote a book titled "The Mirror and the Lamp," in which he celebrated the Romantic view of the imagination as a "radiant projector" (the lamp) that imbued nature with its own spirit, as opposed to the classical notion of imaginative literature as imitating nature (the mirror). Northrop Frye had argued, in his book "Fearful Symmetry," that Blake was not a rambling madman but an inventor of coherent mythological systems. But Bloom took his Romanticism further.

The conventional view of the movement held that the Romantic poets longed for salvation in the form of a oneness with nature, as expressed, for instance, by Wordsworth, in his "Intimations of Immortality" ode. The usual Romantic hierarchy placed Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats at the apex of the movement. But Bloom felt that this longing represented only the more earthbound form of Romanticism. The true Romantic, as represented by Shelley and, above all, Blake, looked not to nature—a thing external to the self—to save him but to the world-altering power of his



own imagination. Nature was material, and therefore fixed and limiting. Only by struggling to liberate itself from the world entirely—to fill itself with invented mythical forms rather than natural ones—could the imagination be free.

Earliest memories. Bloom, aged three or four, sits on the floor of the kitchen in his family's apartment in the Bronx. He is reading a library book, and his mother is moving around the room in her bare feet, preparing dinner. Every now and then, without looking up from his book, Bloom reaches out to press his mother's feet, and every now and then his mother reaches down to rub his head.

Bloom's father, who is employed in a garment factory, comes home from work. He doesn't speak to anyone, not because he is moody or unloving but because he just doesn't speak very often. After dinner, he sits in the living room by himself, with the lights off, smoking a cigar.

Bloom's mother, Paula, is born in a shtetl outside Brest-Litovsk, the daughter of a carpenter; Bloom's father, William, is born in Odessa, the son of a dockworker. Paula and William both emigrate to America after the First World War, but most of their relatives stay behind and die in the Holocaust. When Bloom's parents first arrive in New York, they live on the Lower East Side; they meet on Orchard Street. They marry, keep an Orthodox household, and speak only Yiddish. When they have a little money, they move to the Bronx. They have three daughters, who grow up to do secretarial work, and, ten years later, two sons. The elder son becomes a postal worker. Harold is born on July 11, 1930.

Bloom is the only one in his family to take an interest in reading, but this interest is neither disparaged nor fussed over. He is taken to the local public library by his sisters. The collection at the library is excellent, and Bloom memorizes much of Hart Crane and William Blake by the time he is ten. He teaches himself to read Yiddish at three, Hebrew at four, and English at five. (He learns English by reading Blake and Crane—he didn't hear the language spoken until he was six.) He hesitates to be bar mitzvahed, because he feels that the family's rabbi has failed to resolve his doubts about certain parts of the Bible. For instance, he feels that Yahweh's impulse to murder Moses in the Negev has not been adequately accounted for.

Bloom attends the Bronx High School of Science. He hates school and performs badly, but because he does well on his Regents exams he obtains a scholarship to Cornell. On his first evening in Ithaca, he is startled and horrified by the sight of a cow (he didn't know what it was).

Bloom has a few friends, but not many—he is lonely. He loves his sisters and his parents; he doesn't care for his brother. A moderately happy childhood, in other words.

On the phone, Michaelangelo, the Borgesian psychoanalyst, had been extremely friendly. However, in the few days since Bloom's arrival in Spain, he had become increasingly paranoid. He had shown up at the prize dinner in Barcelona, a lurking, shifty-eyed figure with a soul patch and a mustache, whose hair had receded into the frazzled tonsure of a graying clown. He was convinced, it emerged, that the Catalans who had surrounded Bloom since his arrival were enraged that he, Michaelangelo, had persuaded Bloom to participate in an event about Borges, since Borges was not Catalan. Bloom heard, further, that Michaelangelo had a problem with Catalans because he was a devout Franco supporter. "He is not very well," Bloom commented sadly, as it came to seem to all involved that Michaelangelo was perhaps out of his mind.

Indeed, the longer Bloom spent on Majorca, the more he felt oppressed by a sense of encroaching lunacy. The first night in his hotel, he had been sitting up in bed, reading, when the automated lighting system switched itself off, and, baffled by the profusion of switches and blinded by the darkness, he was obliged to stumble out into the corridor, completely naked, in order to knock on Jeanne's door and secure assistance. The following day, he learned that a Majorcan theatre group was staging a production of "Macbeth" which involved a nude leading man and copulation onstage. ("I trust that the males and females involved have an authentic regard for one another," he said.) At a press conference, a young man asked him a staggering question that was translated as "Is the U.S. now Titus Andronicus, or is Mother Teresa Hamlet, seeing as Hamlet fought for what he believed in?"

The day before the Borges dinner, at a glorious three-hour lunch in a white-and-gilt room with a sea view and chandeliers in the shape of palm trees, Bloom met a dean of the local university, Perfecto Cuadrado ("perfect square," he explained), who confirmed his fears about Michaelangelo. Moreover, the occasion was sounding more and more elaborate. Michaelangelo had arranged for after-dinner music and entertainment and proposed that the guests tango late into the night. Bloom had begun to envision the evening as an endless, nightmarish orgy, a coming-to-life of the Buñuel film "The Exterminating Angel." There would be tangos and cacophony and one unendurable entertainment after another and more tangos and he would be trapped with no hope of escape.

At the lunch, champagne was followed by white wine, which was followed by red wine, French brandy, Majorcan brandy, and, the coup de grâce, a famous local liquor, viscous and bright green, which smelled like ouzo and tasted like maple syrup. Bloom grew bold.

"That's it!" he announced at the meal's conclusion. "I cannot go. I simply cannot attend this dinner."

"Harold, you have no choice," Jeanne told him.

"You will have to tell him I am dead."

In the early evening, Bloom, in a better mood, agreed to attend the dinner, but only if he and Jeanne settled on a foolproof plan of escape. When Bloom needed to leave, he told her, he would grasp each of his large earlobes between thumb and forefinger and wiggle them vigorously. At that signal, Jeanne was to stand up and announce that she had to go to the ladies' room, Bloom would make a similar announcement, and they would flee. The guide assigned to show Bloom around Majorca suggested cheerfully that the dinner might be fun. "My dear," Bloom replied, "if I were to dine with six versions of the younger Sophia Loren, each doing a slow striptease, I would still not be looking forward to it."

The evil day arrived.

"Harold!" Michaelangelo greeted him forcefully at the door. Michaelangelo was wearing a white shirt with ruffled cuffs, under a black suit whose trousers he had hoisted up, in the style of the nineteen-thirties, to a few inches below his armpits. Something about his outfit brought out a resemblance to Salvador Dali. He appeared tense. He gestured impatiently for a waiter to bring Bloom and Jeanne each a glass of champagne.

Bloom accepted the champagne and, explaining that he needed to sit down, edged away from Michaelangelo, toward the lecture room. The room—marble-floored and heavy-curtained—was clearly too large for the occasion, and sixteen richly upholstered armchairs had been placed across the floor, three or four feet apart from one another. As yet, the room was empty. Bloom sank into one of the armchairs and looked around. Just outside the open doorway, a champagne cork popped, and the noise was so sharp in the empty marble room that Bloom and Jeanne both jumped.

Perfecto Cuadrado turned up, looking grim. Soon afterward, Michaelangelo herded the society's small group of guests into the room, and he and Bloom and Cuadrado took up seats at a table in the front. Bloom lectured on Borges and the decline of criticism. The men and women in the audience, who were dressed in silks and jewelry for the formal dinner, sat quite still and listened attentively, even though, there being only a few English speakers among them, most could not understand anything he said. Michaelangelo then gave an impassioned and psychoanalytically informed address of his own, in which he explained that Borges had stuttered because at the age of four his mother had dragged him around by his hair.

At dinner, over striped bass, Bloom chatted with a pretty young woman who had a broken leg and painted silk scarves for a living. Suddenly, Michaelangelo appeared at the table.

"Do you think, Harold, that Shakespeare is a writer made by love?" he challenged.

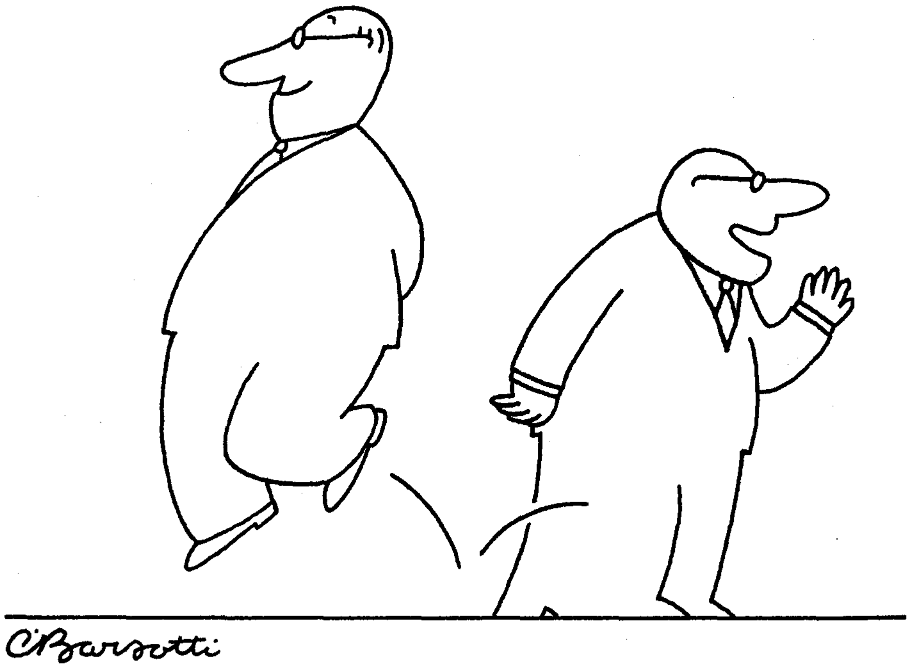
"I suppose all of literature has to be made by desire, broadly speaking," Bloom began doubtfully.

"But I have the impression that Shakespeare is a poet of love!"

"At the end," Bloom said, "the revulsion toward desire is greater than the desire itself."

Michaelangelo left, dissatisfied. Shortly thereafter, Bloom, turning to Jeanne, who was sitting next to him, pulled solemnly on his earlobes. He rose, she rose, and they returned to the hotel.

When he was thirty-five, Bloom fell into the deepest depression of his life. The worst of it lasted eight or nine months, through most of 1965. He started reading Freud and Emerson obsessively, every day. Freud insinuated himself into Bloom's mind and festered there. Bloom began teaching a graduate seminar on psychoanalysis which became quite popular, owing to a phenomenon that Bloom called Uncle Siggy's Revenge. Each year, as the semester progressed, Bloom gradually lost control in the most rococo way. "My transference to Freud got more and more dubious," he says, "and the parapraxes would be-



"Hey, everybody, Quigley is practicing his perp walk."

come so monstrous that in the final two classes everything was an unintended pun or a double-entendre or some terrible self-revelation. I wasn't saying what I meant to say at all. It became occult!"

One night in the summer of 1967, Bloom, still in the midst of his depression, had a hideous nightmare. He dreamed that a giant winged figure, a terrifying angel out of the Book of Ezekiel, or Blake's vision of the Covering Cherub, was pressing down on his chest. He woke up gasping for breath. The next day, he started to write what he thought of as a prose rhapsody titled "The Covering Cherub." He worked on it for six years.

For Bloom, this was an excruciatingly slow pace. He toiled, he agonized, he groaned. He phoned his friend and colleague Geoffrey Hartman and talked to him for hours, until Hartman began to feel like a midwife to whatever strange progeny Bloom was bringing forth. "It was some kind of psychomachia, a battle within the psyche," Hartman says. "The ratios and their naming"—the theory was divided into six "ratios"—"were a kind of parturition. There were labor pains, and you could *see* them. Harold would struggle, and there would be a contraction, and out would come one ratio, and then another."

At some point during his years in the wilderness, Bloom lost his faith. He decided that Blake—and, through Blake, he—had been deceiving himself. No longer did Bloom believe that real imaginative freedom was possible. It was still the duty of the poet to struggle for it, against the stifling force of his great poetic predecessors—if he avoided them, he would remain weak, a minor poet. The fight was a worthy one, a soul's crusade, but it was doomed to fail. "I really did use to believe that I could clear my optics, the inner and the outer eye," Bloom says. "I believed that the world could be remade. I thought that teaching Blake and Shelley could put people in touch with some kind of inner light. It sounds absurd now, a very beautiful delusion. But when I was young I did believe it."

As he was losing his faith in Blake, Bloom was undergoing a conversion of sorts, to the ancient heretical creed of Gnosticism. The Gnostic—whether of the Jewish, the Christian, or the Sufi variety—believes that, as the result of a primal, catastrophic splitting, the universe is utterly alienated from God. All of nature, the world as we know it, was created by an evil demiurge, and is man's prison. Man himself—his body, his mind, what he calls his soul—is also wholly fallen. All that remains of God on earth is a spark, or *pneuma*—a fragment of the divine that resides in humans but to which they have no access without Gnostic revelation. Salvation can be achieved only by gaining "knowledge" of this spark and thus reuniting with the alien God. (Bloom even wrote a "Gnostic novel," titled "The Flight to Lucifer." It was a schematic, underfictionalized work, though, and he now wishes he had never published it.)

If Bloom had once, by embracing Blake's mythology, turned away from a Wordsworthian view of nature, his conversion to Gnosticism removed him infinitely further from it. Nature, he now believed, was not only not redemptive—nature was fallen, and if a man was to be saved he was obliged to reject it completely. Gnosticism was, in many ways, ideally suited to Bloom's temperament, because it rejected all worldly authorities outside the self, and because it allowed him to hold an utterly bleak view of the universe while preserving a morsel of transcendent, visionary hopefulness.

In 1973, Bloom finally, painfully, finished the book that had begun with his nightmare. The book, "The Anxiety of Influence," was dense and complicated; it employed so many obscure terms that it seemed to have been written by a kabbalistic Lewis Carroll. "We all remember the great night at Ezra Stiles College when Harold was going to unveil his new theory of poetry," says Perry Meisel, now a professor at New York University, then Bloom's student. "It was a very big event. We didn't understand a word of it"—a year after the book came out, Bloom read it again and was amused to discover that even he couldn't figure out what he was talking about—"but we all remembered one line: 'There are no poems, only relations between poems.' "

What Bloom had done, in essence, was to distill his disappointed Romanticism through a kind of disembodied version of Freud. From Freud he borrowed the notion that the human quest for imaginative autonomy takes the form of a son struggling to deny his origins—to be, in a sense, his own father. Thus, the poet's quest for originality takes the form of struggling against his poetic influences: struggling, that is, to appropriate and warp, or "misread," his precursor's work in such a way that, to a later reader, it would appear that the precursor had failed. It would seem that his poem was in some way asking to be corrected by the poem of the later poet; or as though the precursor were the weak successor to the later poet, and not the other way around. This struggle was motivated by a profound ambivalence toward the poetry's influence—"the giving that famishes the taker," as Bloom put it—and it was savage. Savage, but also tricky, underhanded. The strength of the strong poet, as Geoffrey Hartman said in an essay about Bloom, "is chiefly cunning: more Jacob's strength than Esau's, more Odyssean than Achillean. The revisionary ratios are a 'typology of evasions.' "

The form of the theory was Freudian, but Freud much changed. For one thing, Bloom, unlike Freud, allowed no room for optimism; in Bloom's theory, there was no equivalent of sublimation, no acceptable substitute for the impossible goal of self-birth. A poem, Bloom wrote, was not "an overcoming of anxiety" but "an achieved anxiety." The struggle for meaning was the only meaning to be had. What's more, there was nothing sexual, or even psychological, about Bloom's theory. Bloom placed enormous emphasis on the difference between the poet-as-poet—what he called the "aboriginal poetic self"—and the human being who wrote poetry. "Anxiety" was not a psychological term. It was purely literary, having to do only with the relationship between one poem and another.

Bloom stressed this because he was committed to the idea that genius was a universal quality, separable from the arbitrary colorings of psychology or historical period. But as he banished these impurities his conception of the poet became so utterly leached of human qualities that it came to look strangely like the non-author he despised in deconstruction.

Duet. The Blooms' living room in their New Haven house, midsummer. The house—large, dark-wood shingled—is on a quiet side street with porches and gardens, and there is no sound of traffic from the busier streets nearby. The living room is dim and cool, because white cloth shades have been pulled down over the windows. Bach, turned very low, is playing on the stereo. In the far corner, on one side of the door that leads to the dining room, Bloom lies, motionless, on a brown leather lounger, his feet propped on an ottoman. On the other side of the door, facing her husband like a matching andiron, Jeanne reclines on a blue velveteen La-Z-Boy. Bloom addresses his wife's suggestion that he should retire from teaching because it exhausts him. Jeanne herself is a retired child psychologist. She and Bloom have been married for forty-four years. They have two sons, Daniel and David. Bloom's voice is broad and soft and he speaks slowly. Jeanne's voice is harder, quicker, more nasal. They have had this conversation before.

"If I stop teaching, I'll be a burden for you," Bloom says sadly. "My sense of isolation would become greater and greater and already you complain that I follow you around and demand to know when you're coming back, and so on. At least teaching takes me into campus and makes me see people. I don't meet many people anymore. It's so hard to make new friends."

"It wouldn't be hard if we only had people to dinner. We have to *cultivate* people. If you cleaned off the dining-room table, we could have people to dinner."

"I don't have enough friends. Which must be my fault." In a desolate tone: "I don't see how that happened." Bloom broods. After a while: "We do pick up occasional quasi-grandchildren among my students. And if I don't teach, there won't be any more of them."

"Yes, but Harold, we've met a lot of nice people in the last few years. We don't cultivate them."

"Because I always have to write."

"So it's circular. You have to write because you don't have more friends."

"I'd feel totally useless if I couldn't write. And it's the same thing with teaching."

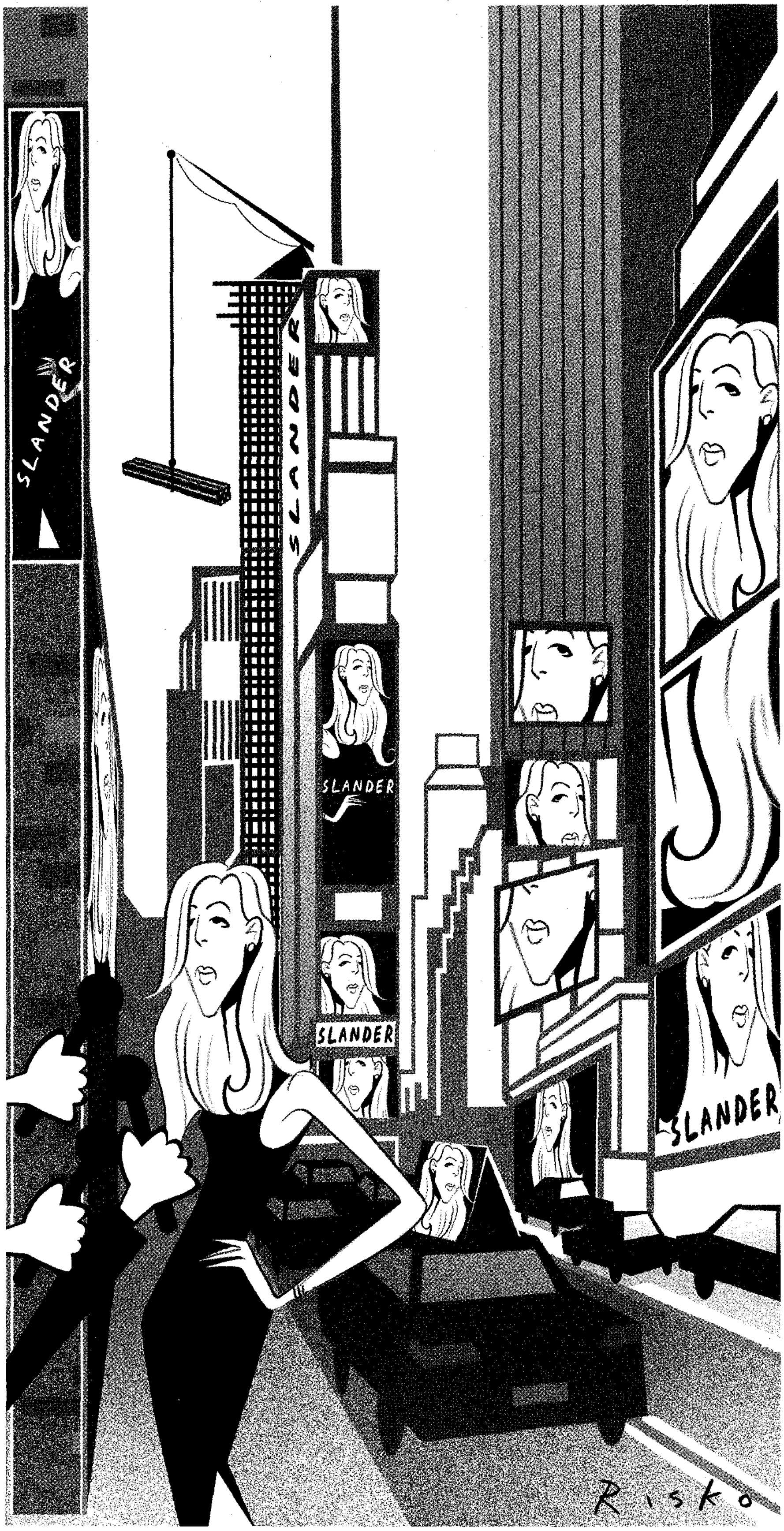
"But when you come back from a seminar, Harold, you're exhausted."

"I'm exhausted because I've failed. I used to teach better than I teach now. I hopelessly digress. I get lost, and have the embarrassment of having to ask the class where I was before I digressed. It's

ROBERT RISKO, ANDY BOROWITZ

ANN COULTER: MEDIA VICTIM

In this universe, the public square is wall-to-wall liberal propaganda.—*"Slander: Liberal Lies About the American Right," by Ann Coulter, No. 1 on the Times best-seller list.*



a sign of old age. I don't know. I don't mean to sound so fretful."

The décor in the room is professorial modern—a Scandinavian-style wood coffee table; a square-cornered sofa; a crowd of pictures and books; an upright piano; a harpsichord. On top of one bookshelf stands a large, heavy head sculpted in clay, thick-featured and monumental: Bloom, aged thirty-seven, by his late mother-in-law. On the sofa and on the piano is arranged a collection of small stuffed animals, belonging to Bloom: a penguin, Percival; an owl, Wordsworth; a donkey, Eeyore; a gorilla, Gorilla Gorilla; a duck-billed platypus, Oscar; and a wombat, MacGregor. The wombat is named for a real wombat owned by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, which Rossetti used to bring over to William Morris's house. Morris, being fond of animals, would play with MacGregor while Rossetti slipped upstairs and played with Mrs. Morris.

"You really didn't get tired when you were younger," Jeanne says.

"Ah. That is the heart of the matter. I'm now so exhausted so much of the time, and it makes me irritable and fretful like a little child."

Bloom is growing old in this room. He spends much of his time reclining in his lounger. At his right hand and at his left are side tables on which small piles of books await his consideration. It is a good room for such a vulnerably receptive instrument as Bloom—protected from light and noise and heat and unpredictable demands on his physical or emotional resources. When he is alone in his living room, his melancholy and his weariness can breathe and ripen, undisturbed.

"I am alienated from my entire profession," Bloom says.

"You don't get along badly with people you know. It's people in print you don't get along with."

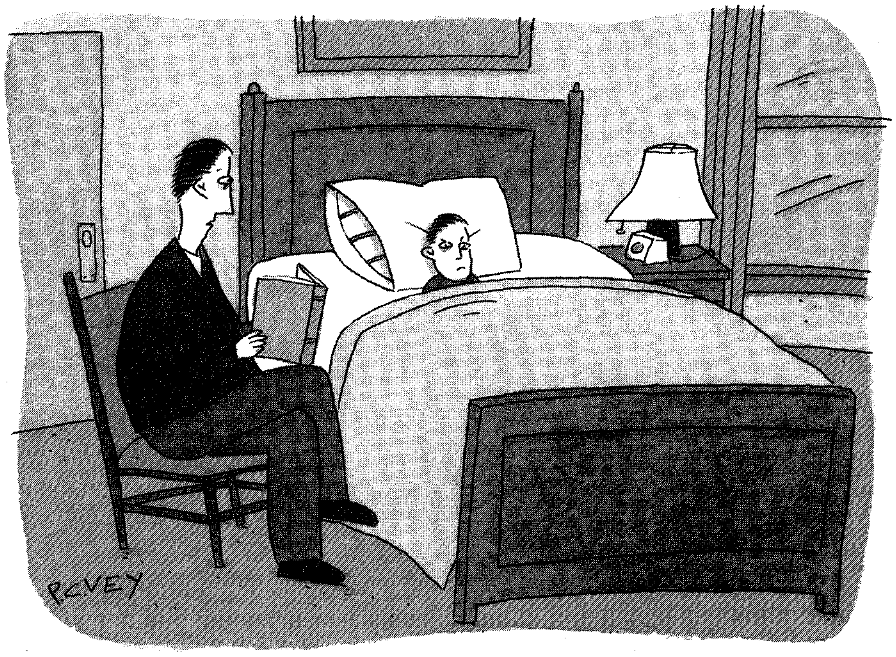
"That's true."

Bloom is indeed alienated from his entire profession. He has given up teaching graduate students because, he says, he fears that they will be tarred by his brush. (The value of his support has also been somewhat downgraded by his habit of scrawling genially, on recommendations, "Best student I ever had.") As much as for his notions about literature, Bloom is mocked for his gargantuan persona. "He has a kind of Tamburlaine ambition," Kermode says. "He wants to ride through Persepolis. In our age that always seems slightly absurd."

When Bloom's colleagues read his recent writing at all, it often appears to them impressionistic and self-indulgently personal. With his best-sellers and his middlebrow, preacherly tone ("How to Read and Why"), Bloom is thought to have become little more than a popularizer, cooking chicken soup for the literary soul. When he is not dismissed altogether, he is disparaged for being naïve: historically naïve to imagine the poetic soul to be a virgin birth, uncontaminated by the poet's social world; politically naïve to ignore the ways in which poetry has profited from various sorts of oppression; aesthetically naïve to, for instance, discuss the characters of plays as though they were real people rather than components in a poetic structure. He is, in certain circles, a laughingstock.

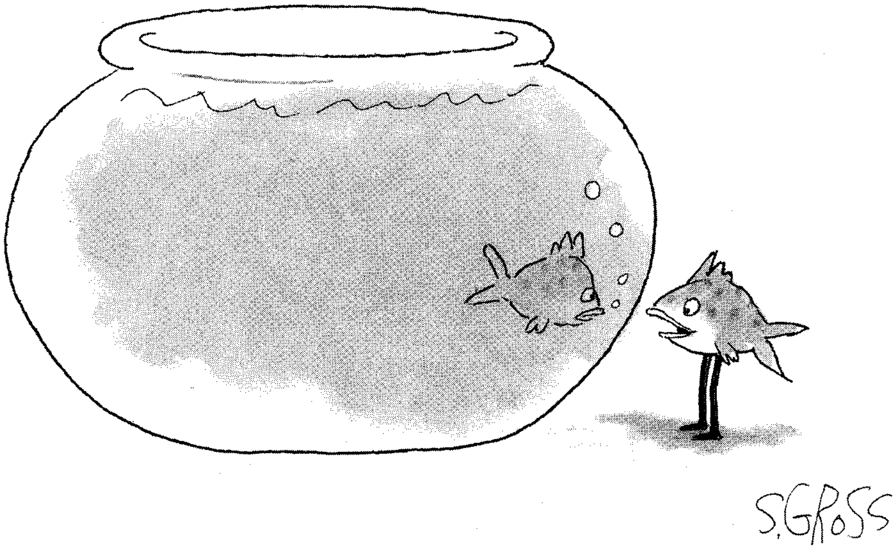
Bloom is aware of this contempt, and he more than repays it. He calls his opponents "a rabblement of lemmings," made prisoners of a "ghastly conformity" by the fear of political censure. He finds ridiculous the sorts of criticism which imagine that, by unmasking insidious political messages in literature, they are contributing to a freedom struggle. He considers multiculturalist theory a condescending, sterile form of social work, its proponents ignorant cheerleaders. He knows that people find baffling his obstinate march backward, away from criticism's contemporary sophistications and toward the desacralized fetishes of the past—character criticism! genius! universal aesthetic value!—but he claims that he no longer cares. John Hollander, a friend and colleague at Yale, said of Bloom's Shakespeare book, knowing it would please him, that it set Shakespeare criticism back a hundred years. Bloom has said, of the experience of giving a lecture at Oxford, "I watched the faces of my audience as I delivered this, and I saw blank incomprehension. I had a vision of an airplane flying over cows in a meadow."

For Bloom, to discuss a poem as merely one document among others, without evaluating it aesthetically, not only misses the point; it also, more perniciously, hastens the day (which he feels is now inevitable) when aesthetic evaluation is an extinct art, and literary criticism has become indistinguishable from history or sociology or cultural studies. To talk about a poet as a kind of soil sample, to be analyzed for layers of historical and sociological sediment, is to deny the most precious thing in human life: individual genius. In Bloom's view, moreover, the denial of genius is not just an arbitrary trend; it is deeply motivated, by the bit-



"It's not about the story. It's about Daddy taking time out of his busy day to read you the story."

terness of petty minds who, unable to be great or to appreciate greatness, attempt to debunk the very notion out of spite. He has dubbed these minds—in which group he includes all feminist critics, Marxist critics, queer theorists, New Historicists, multiculturalists, and others—the School of Resentment. This group has obsessed Bloom for years. "One gets angry too easily," he says distantly. "One gets too aggressive. One doesn't have much forgiveness."



"In order to be free I had to make certain adjustments."

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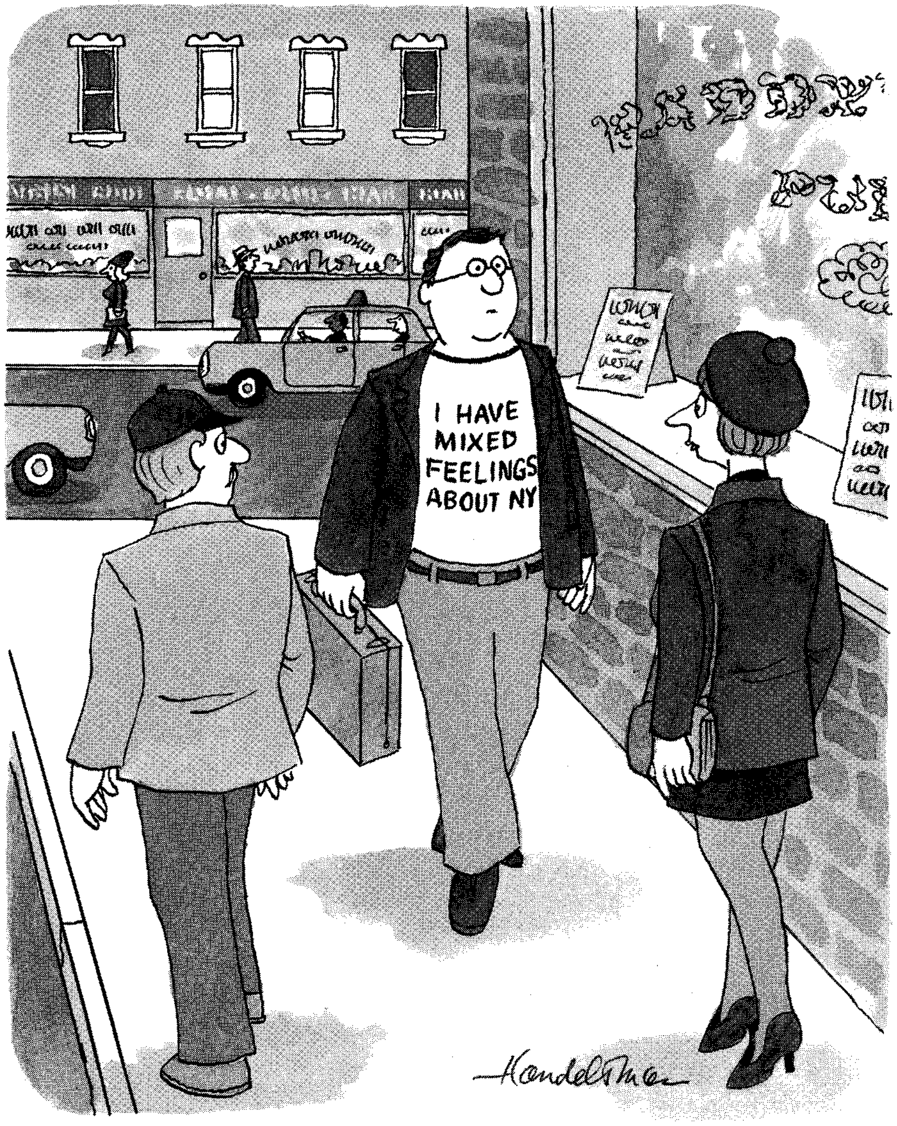
A dean of the School of Resentment, in Bloom's mind, is Stephen Greenblatt, a Shakespeare and Renaissance-literature scholar at Harvard and the progenitor of New Historicism. Greenblatt was once, long ago, an undergraduate in Bloom's Romanticism seminar, and thus his historicist theories smell, to Bloom, of Oedipal treason. It was for this reason that Bloom found himself in an interesting situation when, several years ago, he was invited to give the Tanner Lectures at Princeton, with Greenblatt as one of his respondents. When Greenblatt received his advance copy of the lecture, he found that it contained an extremely belligerent attack on New Historicism and, by implication, on Greenblatt himself, including all Bloom's most withering epithets.

"I'm not usually very good at letting out aggression," Greenblatt says, recalling his feelings upon receiving this paper. "But I thought, Why not try to let it out for once, so I wrote a paper about what I thought was weird and wrong about the Shakespeare project. Well, the way the Tanner series works is that you have a fancy lunch before the lectures. I hadn't seen Harold in years, and he gave me the full treatment: huge wet kisses, a lot of 'my darling's and 'dearest's, and he kept calling me 'the Noble Greenblatt' for some reason. Meanwhile, he had his paper about the rabblement of lemmings and I had my own piece of toxic waste in return. But he insisted on sitting next to me, and he kept squeezing my thigh and repeating that I was the Noble Greenblatt and carrying on and saying what an old man he was and what an amiable brontosaurus. The whole number. We finished lunch and went into the very grand lecture hall, filled with people, and he again insisted on sitting next to me. Then, near the end of the introduction, he leaned over and whispered, 'By the way, my dearest, I want you to know that I've changed my lecture.' He looked around at Princeton, the arch-goyish place, and said, 'After all, we are landsmen.' The Masonic handshake for Jews! And he went on to give a lecture about Falstaff, and there was no rabblement of lemmings and no attack on the School of Resentment!

"Well, I quickly took a few things out, but if I'd taken out all the nasty bits there would have been literally nothing left. So I delivered my lecture, and the audience laughed uproariously, and Bloom sat on the platform and he began folding up his face and holding his head and looking miserable and looking like he was dying—a very, very elaborate series of expressions about being treated in this way. And then I realized, halfway through my own performance, that he had brilliantly set me up. I fell right into his trap. It was just so splendidly done."

From the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth, the most common mode of Shakespeare criticism focussed on the plays' characters. The creation of memorable, lifelike personalities was held to be Shakespeare's greatest achievement (his language was felt, by many, to be unnecessarily convoluted and obscure), and the business of criticism, accordingly, was to illuminate and explain these personalities, in the way that one might explain the personality of a real person. Great characters, in the words of the critic Hugh Walpole, were "friends for life." The New Critics, however—the school that was in ascendance from the thirties through the fifties—found this mode of analysis ridiculous. To them, a play, like a poem, was a unified poetic structure that consisted of a particular series of words. Character, plot, themes, and imagery were all integral elements in that structure, and to discuss them separately, as though they had an existence outside it, was to misunderstand what literature was. It was as absurd to discuss a character as a personality distinct from his play as it would be to ask, as the critic L.C. Knights did in the mocking title of a 1933 essay, "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?" By the time Bloom was a student, the New Critics' view was firmly established as orthodoxy; and even though other aspects of New Criticism have since gone out of fashion, character criticism still appears as preposterous to most critics today as it did then.

It is for this reason, among others, that Bloom's book on Shakespeare appears so startlingly eccentric. His focus is astonishingly narrow: he cares *only* about character. He doesn't care about structure—what the play shows and what it leaves out, how the action unfolds. (Indeed, just as it is the sign of genius to exist apart from the particularities of historical situation, so, for Bloom, the sign of greatness in a character is to seem


I HAVE MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT NY

only accidentally part of the play. He likes to imagine his favorites taking journeys outside their texts and visiting one another—Rosalind chatting with Falstaff.) Bloom doesn't care about circumstance or luck or disaster or choice or other people or any of the forces that make up plot. He emphatically rejects the Aristotelian claim that plot generates character, rather than the other way around. He barely even discusses the plays' language.

Bloom's forty-nine-page chapter on "Hamlet" does not once discuss Hamlet's choices or the situation in which he finds himself. It seems as though, as far as Bloom is concerned, Hamlet might as well have stayed in Wittenberg and passed through his twenties staring moodily out the window, since it is only his soul that counts. The old line about missing the main event says "It's 'Hamlet' without the Prince of Denmark"; Bloom presents the Prince of Denmark without "Hamlet."

When, in this and other books, he does discuss crucial choices—bad choices—that characters make and that thenceforth define them, he is never convinced. He is not convinced that Shylock would "really" convert to Christianity. He is not convinced that Isabel Archer, in Henry James's "Portrait of a Lady," would really marry Gilbert Osmond. He sees Macbeth as a helpless man at the mercy of fates and visions. This is one of the reasons, presumably, that characters seem to Bloom (as he is always saying) like real people: many of the noticeable differences between characters and people—that people have a physical existence; that characters' biographies are not complete, from birth to death, but involve only a few, connected incidents—simply do not matter to Bloom. To him, what matters is the essence of personality, and all the rest is dross.

In the book's preface, Bloom declares himself as "strongly favoring character over action," but he goes further than that. Action, or, indeed, movement of any kind, seems vulgar and provincial through Bloom's eyes, because it is local—moored to a particular time and place. Poetic spirit, on the other hand, is timeless and placeless and therefore free. Moreover, action requires an inhibition of consciousness—it requires turning away from other possibilities and, in the moment of decision, blocking off all those mental motions that work against action, such as futility and ambivalence. The will to act, therefore, is a sign not that a man is full of force but that he is empty of human richness. "The exaltation of the will, in Iago," Bloom writes, "emanates from an ontological lack so great that no human emotion possibly could fill it." Action, decision, will—all are limited. Bloom's hero is Hamlet, whom he compares to Nietzsche's Dionysian man. "Both have once looked truly into the essence of things," he writes. "They have *gained knowledge*, and nausea inhibits action; for their action could not change anything in the eternal nature of things. . . . Knowledge kills action; action requires the veils of illusion: that is the doctrine of Hamlet."

Shakespeare's plays, for Bloom, are Romantic consciousness turned into spectacle. David Bromwich, once a Bloom student and now a colleague at Yale, says that when Bloom talks about a poem he seems to inhabit it, as an actor inhabits a role. The voice of a poem is a literary character for Bloom, and, similarly, a literary character is the voice of a poem.

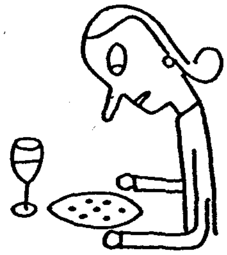
In his writing in the last ten years, Bloom has turned away from the academy entirely. This is, of course, in one sense, an act of war—a violent secession from the School of Resentment. But at the same time there is, in his more recent books, an odd new gentleness, as if he were turning away from the eternal agon—the glorious battles that had always defined for him the spirit of poetry. In "Genius," the anxiety of influence is no longer a matter of crushing a beloved enemy. The real anxiety, Bloom writes, may be the "agon with the self"—the fear that one's own powers are not large enough. In the past, Bloom saw criticism as part of the history of literature, crashing into its battles and slashing about with its judgments. Now he feels that the chief role of the critic is appreciation. "Appreciation may judge, but always with gratitude, and frequently with awe and wonder," he writes in "Genius." He quotes Emerson in the book's introduction: "We need not fear excessive influence. A more generous trust is permitted. Serve the great."

Bloom identifies "Genius" as a book in the tradition of Emerson's "Representative Men" and Carlyle's "On Heroes." But "Genius," as well as "The Western Canon," "Shakespeare," and "How to Read and Why," belongs also to another tradition: that of the American entrepreneur of discernment. In the first few decades of the last century in particular, a number of writers set out to cater to the American desire for self-improvement by means of cultural enrichment. In 1909, for instance, Charles Eliot, the president of Harvard, began publishing his famous multi-volume anthology of Western classics, the "Five-Foot Shelf" of books. In the nineteen-twenties, John Erskine set up the Columbia great-books curriculum. William Lyon Phelps, an English professor at Yale, fashioned himself into America's most popular literary critic by lecturing to women's clubs, writing folksy articles for *The Rotarian* and *Ladies' Home Journal*, and discussing literary topics regularly on a radio variety program. During the Second World War, John Erskine's student Mortimer Adler, the author of "How to Read a Book," started up an enormously popular series of great-books discussion groups in Chicago.

Eliot, Erskine, Phelps, and Adler were inheritors of the Arnoldian tradition and, closer to home, the Unitarian tradition, which held that aesthetic self-cultivation would lead to moral improvement. They, like Bloom, rejected historicism as a matter for narrow scholars. The most valuable insights to be gleaned from the great works were universal, and it was a sign of greatness in a book that it spoke to people across time and cultures. Any man, they believed, who resolved to spend a quiet hour patiently with a book could begin to tap its essence. And they believed, as Bloom believes, with Emerson, that "culture implies all which gives the mind possession of its own powers."

Bloom has joined this tradition in his usual massive fashion, not only with his best-sellers but also with the six hundred-odd volumes in the Chelsea House series that he founded in 1983. Each Chelsea House book—"Bloom's BioCritiques," "Bloom's Major Poets," "Bloom's Notes"—is a collection of critical essays about an author, with an introduction by Bloom. And Bloom—like his idol, Dr. Johnson, in his comprehensive "Lives of the Poets"—bows to the commercial instincts of his publishers, writing introductions to books about even those authors for whose work he has no respect whatever. (In his delicately worded introduction to "Bloom's BioCritiques: Alice Walker," he writes, "There is a tenacity in her quest that compensates the reader for at least part of what is sacrificed in storytelling and in the representation of character.")

Bloom, like his predecessors, has become rich and famous. He loves this, of course. But there was a blithe, paterfamilias confidence about the earlier entrepreneurs that Bloom's work is missing. To read Bloom with Erskine and Adler in mind is to realize that the forties were a long, long time ago. The Erskines and the Adlers believed that they were bestowing moral and cultural goods on the masses; Bloom describes himself as seeking refuge in the common reader—the last man, he feels, who still might read for pleasure. They retained an Arnoldian faith that reading good books inculcated sound principles; Bloom has said, "If we read the Western canon in order to form our social, political, or personal moral values, I firmly believe we will become monsters of selfishness and exploitation." Adler's productions were marketed as tools enabling their user to impress his friends at cocktail parties; Bloom, poignantly, has steered the opposite course. "Imaginative literature is otherness, and as such alleviates loneliness," he writes in "How to Read and Why." "We read not only because we cannot know enough people, but because friendship is so vulnerable."



New Haven, midsummer, just before dinner.

"Jeannie Bear, don't you want a drink? Do you want to relent and have some Scotch? It's so cold in here."

Jeanne has turned off the air-conditioning, but it is still very cold in the kitchen. She has recently given up alcohol, along with most carbohydrates, for health reasons. For Bloom, cognac is a life-giving nectar.

"No, thank you," Jeanne says.

"I think you shouldn't have given up Scotch," Bloom tells her. "It's a shock to your system. I've known you for nearly half a century and you've always drunk Scotch."

"No I haven't always drunk Scotch, Harold."

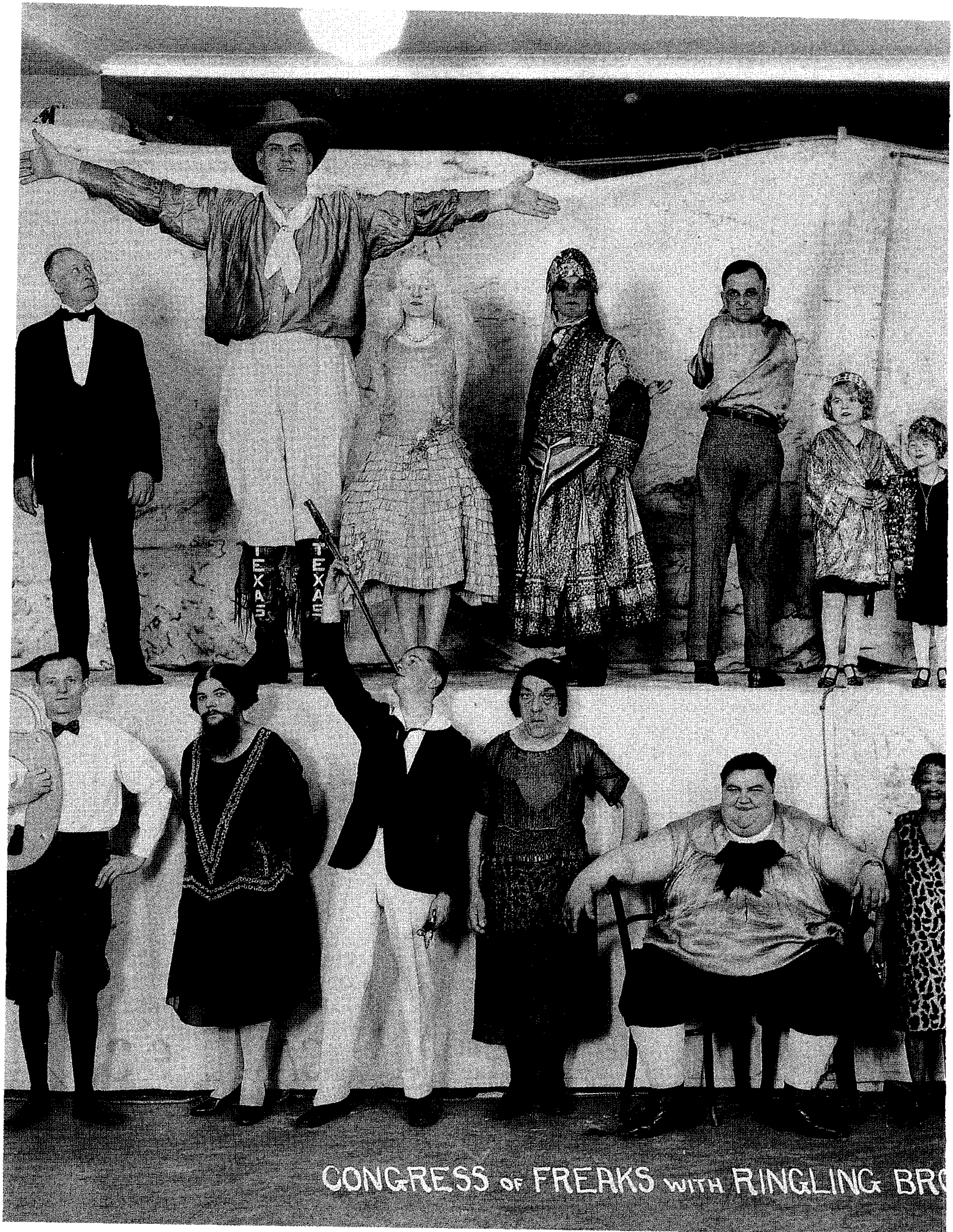
"Well, you have as long as I can remember."

Bloom sets his cognac down on the countertop and proceeds distractedly, morosely, to unload the dishwasher. His great back bows, lowered against the gentle counterforce of his red-and-blue striped suspenders. He unbends, reaches for his brandy, and gazes unseeingly at a shelf of glasses. As he straightens, his wide, gloomy face looms into a mirror with a round red plastic frame that hangs next to the shelf.

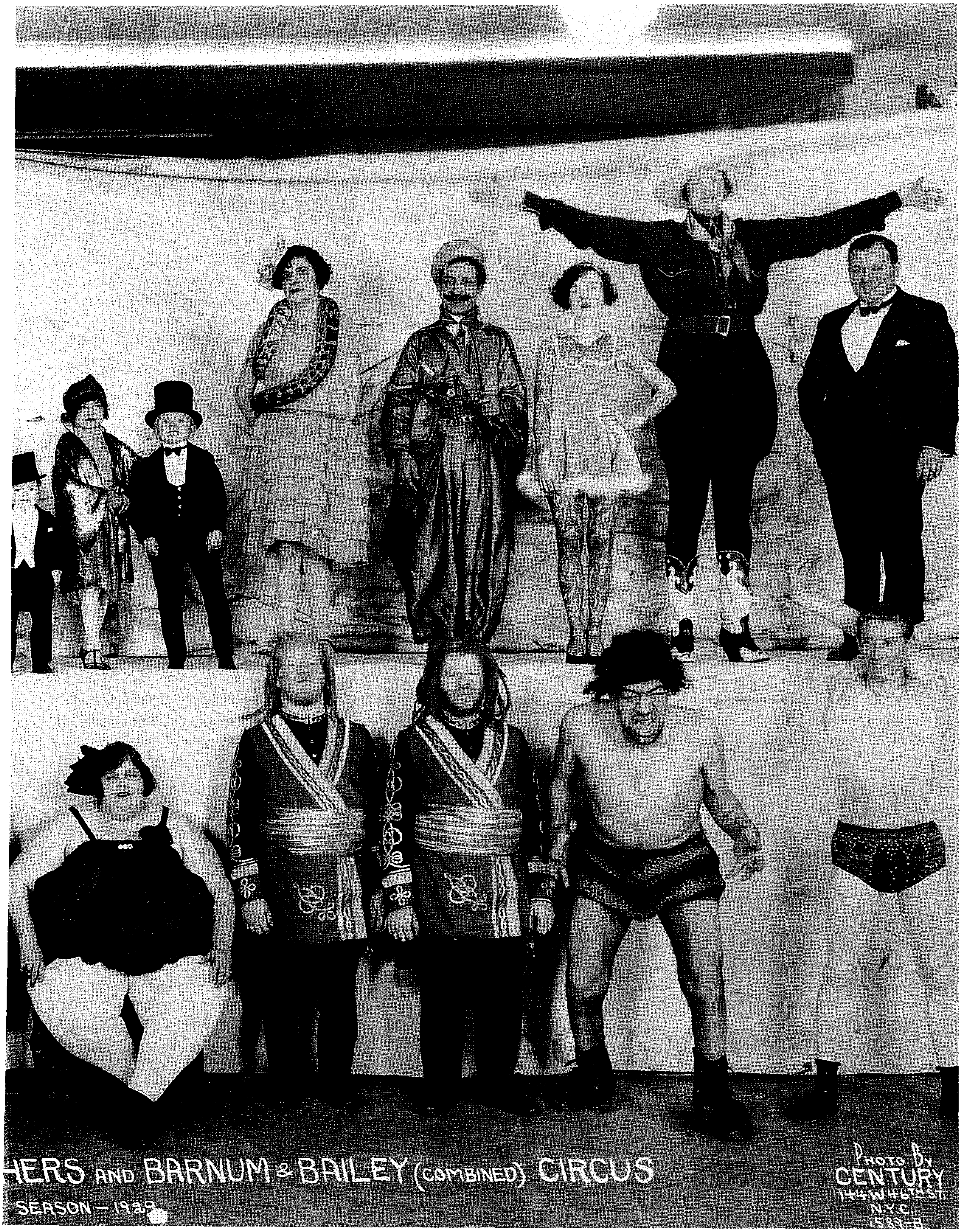
Later, just before bed, Bloom eases into a chair and turns on the kitchen television to check on the progress of the Yankees game. His passionate love for the Yankees has remained constant since he was a child. He draws up his chair until it is inches from the screen.

"Ah, Little Bear, we are winning!" he cries out to his wife. "How amiable!"

At eight-forty-five, even earlier than usual, Bloom switches off the television. He is exhausted. Jeanne intends to stay up to watch an old movie, so he bids her good night and slowly climbs the stairs to his bedroom. He will read for a while and try to doze, but it is unlikely that he will sleep soundly. Bloom suffers the insomnia of giants. ♦


TEXAS
TEXAS
CONGRESS OF FREAKS WITH RINGLING BR

AT THE MUSEUMS *Through the Jazz Age and the Depression, Edward J. Kelty took to the road, shooting large-format-camera*
tabs, so it has survived only in private circus collections. The International Center of Photography is showing "Step Right This Way,'


HERS AND BARNUM & BAILEY (COMBINED) CIRCUS
SEASON — 1929
PHOTO BY
CENTURY
144 W 46TH ST.
N.Y.C.
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COURTESY INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

panoramas of travelling circuses in their boom years. Kelty was a careless conservator of his own work, often selling negatives to settle bar an exhibition of his scarce prints, like this one of Tom Ton, Revolvo, Eko & Iko the Ambassadors from Mars, and colleagues.

LIFE AND LETTERS

MR. DIFFICULT

William Gaddis and the problem of hard-to-read books.

BY JONATHAN FRANZEN

For a while last winter, after my third novel came out, I was getting a lot of angry mail from strangers. What upset them was not the novel—a comedy about a family in crisis—but some impolitic remarks I'd made in the press, and I knew that it was a mistake to send more than bland one-sentence notes in reply. But I couldn't help fighting back a little. Taking a page from an old literary hero of mine, William Gaddis, who had long deplored the reading public's confusion of the writer's work and the writer's private self, I suggested that the letter writers look at my fiction rather than listen to distorted news reports about its author.

A few months later, one of the original senders, a Mrs. M——, in Maryland, wrote back with proof that she'd done the reading. She began by listing thirty fancy words and phrases from my novel, words like "diurnality" and "antipodes," phrases like "electro-pointillist Santa Claus faces." She then posed the dreadful question: "Who is it that you are writing for? It surely could not be the average person who just enjoys a good read." And she offered this caricature of me and my presumed audience:

> The elite of New York, the elite who are beautiful, thin, anorexic, neurotic, sophisticated, don't smoke, have abortions tri-yearly, are antiseptic, live in lofts or penthouses, this superior species of humanity who read *Harper's* and *The New Yorker.*

The subtext seemed to be that difficulty in fiction is the tool of socially privileged readers and writers who turn up their noses at the natural pleasure of a "good read" in favor of the invidious, artificial pleasure of feeling superior to other people. To Mrs. M——, I was "a pompous snob, and a real ass-hole."

One part of me, the part that takes after my father, who admired scholars for their intellect and their large vocabularies and was something of a scholar himself, wanted to call Mrs. M—— a few names in reply. But another, equally strong part of me was stricken to learn that Mrs. M—— felt excluded by my language. She sounded a little bit like my mother, a lifelong anti-élitist who used to get good rhetorical mileage out of the mythical "average person." My mother might have asked me if I really had to use words like "diurnality," or if I was just showing off.

In the face of hostility like Mrs. M——'s, I find myself paralyzed. It turns out that I subscribe to two wildly different models of how fiction relates to its audience. In one model, which was championed by Flaubert, the best novels are great works of art, the people who manage to write them deserve extraordinary credit, and if the average reader rejects the work it's because the average reader is a philistine; the value of any novel, even a mediocre one, exists independent of how many people are able to appreciate it. We can call this the Status model. It invites a discourse of genius and art-historical importance.

In the opposing model, a novel represents a compact between the writer and the reader, with the writer providing words out of which the reader creates a pleasurable experience. Writing thus entails a balancing of self-expression and communication within a group, whether the group consists of "Finnegans Wake" enthusiasts or fans of Barbara Cartland. Every writer is first a member of a community of readers, and the deepest purpose of reading and writing fiction is to sustain a sense of connectedness, to resist existential loneliness; and so a novel deserves a reader's attention only as long as the author sustains the reader's trust. This is the Contract model. The discourse here is one of pleasure and connection. My mother would have liked it.

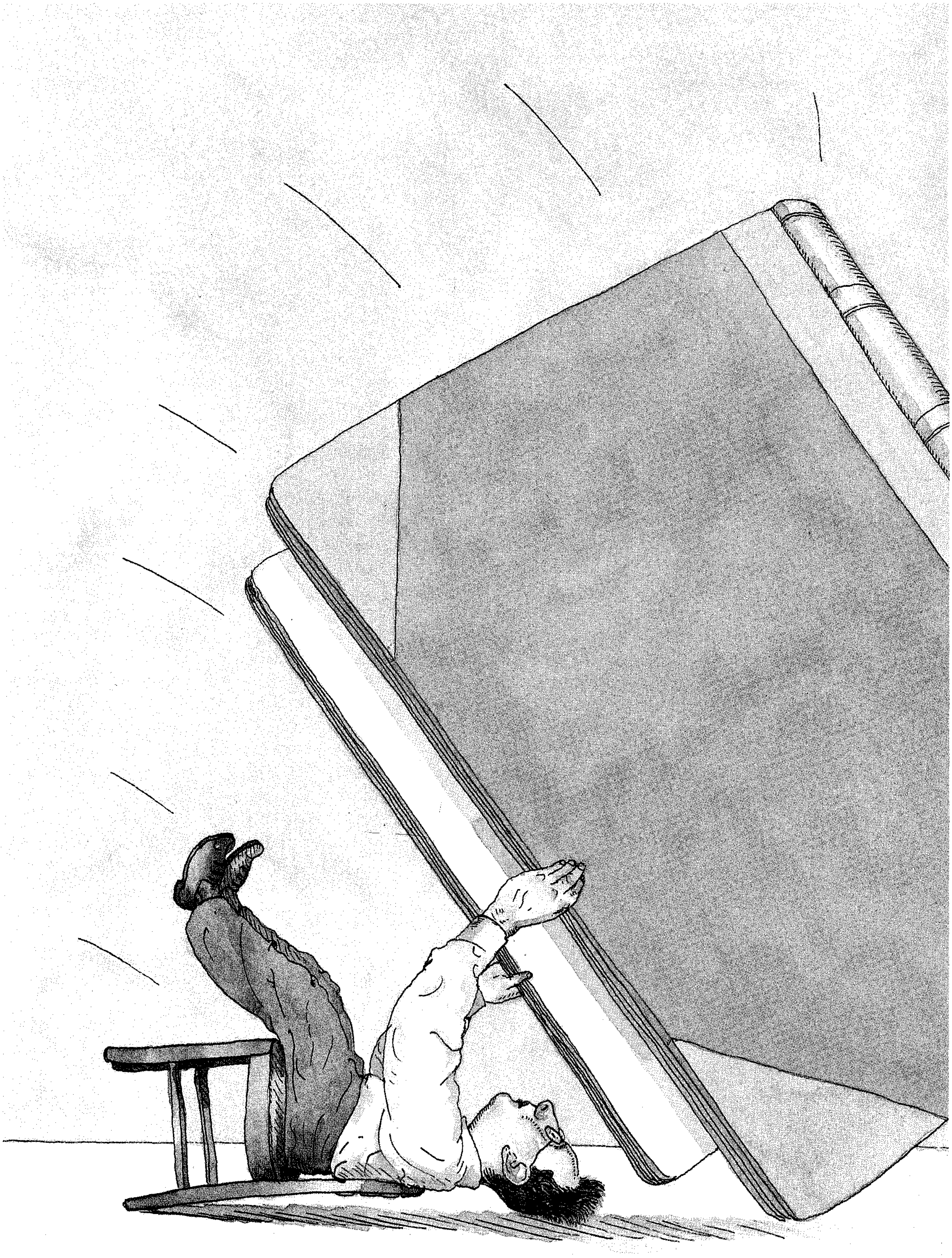
To an adherent of Contract, the Status crowd looks like an arrogant connoisseurial élite. To a true believer in Status, on the other hand, Contract is a recipe for pandering, aesthetic compromise, and a babel of competing literary subcommunities. With certain novels, of course, the distinction doesn't matter so much. "Pride and Prejudice," "The House of Mirth": you call them art, I call them entertainment, we both turn the pages. But the two models diverge tellingly when readers find a book difficult.

According to the Contract model, difficulty is a sign of trouble. In the most grievous cases, it may convict an author of placing his selfish artistic imperatives or his personal vanity ahead of the audience's legitimate desire to be entertained—of being, in other words, an asshole. Taken to its free-market extreme, Contract stipulates that if a product is disagreeable to you the fault must be the product's. If you crack a tooth on a hard word in a novel, you sue the author. If your professor puts Dreiser on your reading list, you write a harsh student evaluation. If the local symphony plays too much twentieth-century music, you cancel your subscription. You're the consumer; you rule.

From a Status perspective, difficulty tends to signal excellence; it suggests that the novel's author has disdained cheap compromise and stayed true to an artistic vision. Easy fiction has little value, the argument goes. Pleasure that demands hard work, the slow penetration of mystery, the outlasting of lesser readers, is the pleasure most worth having; and if, like Mrs. M——, you can't hack it, then to hell with you.

The Status position is undeniably flattering to the writer's sense of importance. In my bones, though, I'm a Contract kind of person. I grew up in a friendly, egalitarian suburb reading books for pleasure and ignoring any writer who didn't take my entertainment seriously enough. Even as an

BARRY BLITT



Halfway through Gaddis's dazzling but demanding second novel, I bailed out. Did I betray him, or did he betray me?

adult, I consider myself a slattern of a reader. I have started (in many cases, more than once) "Moby-Dick," "The Man Without Qualities," "Mason & Dixon," "Don Quixote," "Remembrance of Things Past," "Doctor Faustus," "Naked Lunch," "The Golden Bowl," and "The Golden Notebook" without coming anywhere near finishing them. Indeed, by a comfortable margin, the most difficult book I ever voluntarily read in its entirety was Gaddis's nine-hundred-and-fifty-six-page first novel, "The Recognitions."

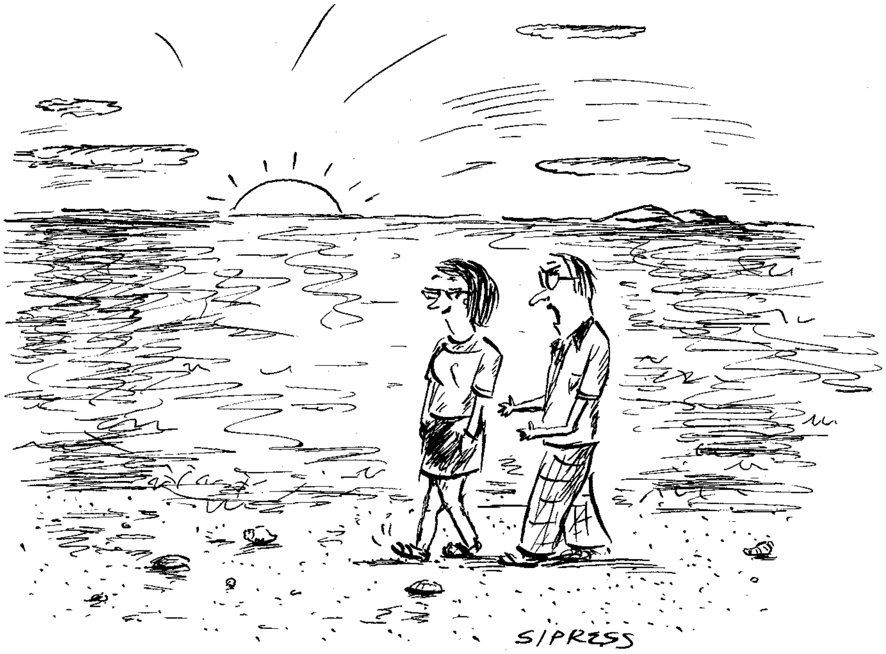
Gaddis, whose last two books are being published this fall, four years after his death, would have been eighty this December. As much as any American writer of his generation, he frankly endorsed Status and disdained Contract. His methods were increasingly postmodern, but he had old-fashioned Romantic and high-modern notions of the artist as savior and the work of art as singular and sacred; the plight of both art and artist in a commercially mad America was at the center of his work. Which work is, itself, quintessentially difficult.

I read "The Recognitions" as a kind of penance, back in the early nineties. During the previous year, while my father, in a different time zone, was losing his mind, I'd written two treatments and four full drafts of an "original" screenplay. In lieu of actual dollar payments, I had the enthusiastic support of a Hollywood agent who, out of pity or negligence, never mentioned that my story bore a fatal resemblance to "Fun with Dick and Jane," which I hadn't seen. My story had double and triple crosses and characters who used prosthetic makeup to impersonate other characters. I lived in that state of rage which comes of doing sustained work that you know to be shoddy and dishonest. By September, when I finally abandoned the project, one wall of my study was scuffed and dented from the pencils, scripts, shoes, and phone books I'd been throwing at it. I borrowed money and left Philadelphia to sublet a dark, underfurnished Tribeca loft (yes, Mrs. M——, a loft), whose silence was disturbed only by the shadowy traffic of pigeons in the air shaft. I'd been hoping to write some fiction, but I was far too sick of audience-friendly narrative, of well-made plots and lovable characters. One evening, in a state of grim distraction, like somebody going out to score hard drugs, I walked up Sixth Avenue and bought "The Recognitions" in a beautiful, newly reissued Penguin edition.

Every morning for a week and a half, I went from the breakfast table to a beige ultrasuède sofa module, turned on a lamp, and read non-stop for six or eight hours. I had some professional curiosity about Gaddis, but a few hundred pages of "The Recognitions" would have satisfied it. I sat and read the extra seven hundred pages in something like a fugue state, as if planting my feet on a steep slope, climbing. I was reluctant to leave my ultrasuède perch for any reason. The only way I could justify sitting there and spending borrowed money was to make a regular job, with regular hours, out of climbing the mountain.

There were quotations in Latin, Spanish, Hungarian, and six other languages to be rappelled across. Blizzards of obscure references swirled around sheer cliffs of erudition, precipitous discourses on alchemy and Flemish painting, Mithraism and early-Christian theology. The prose came in page-long paragraphs in which oxygen was at a premium, and the emotional temperature of the novel started cold and got colder. The hero, Wyatt Gwyon, was likable as a child ("a small disgruntled person"), but otherwise the author's satiric judgments and intellectual obsessions discouraged intimacy. It was a struggle to figure out what, or even who, the story was about; dialogue was punctuated with dashes and largely unattributed; Wyatt himself dwindled to a furtive, seldom-glimpsed pronoun ("he"); there came brutish party scenes, all-dialogue word storms that raged for scores of pages. The only portable nourishment that might have helped sustain me on my climb was a familiarity with Gaddis's influences, maybe a nice pemmican of T. S. Eliot and Robert Graves, which I hadn't thought to bring. I was alone and unprepared on a steep-sided, frigid, airless, poorly mapped mountain. Did I already mention that "The Recognitions" has nine hundred and fifty-six pages?

But I loved it. At the novel's hidden pinnacle, behind its clouds of subsidiary symbolism, beyond its blind canyons of Beat anti-narrative, is a story about the loss of personal integrity and the difficult work of regaining it. Wyatt, a talented painter and former seminarian in his early thirties, is living in New York, unhappily married, and scraping by as a hired draftsman. He has abandoned his painterly ambitions, possibly because a corrupt French critic panned his early work, but more likely because he is incredibly earnest and has never found an adequate reply to the condemnation of



"All right, Stephanie, you win—it's great to be alive!"

art which a puritanical great-aunt issued in his boyhood: "Our Lord is the only true creator, and only sinful people try to emulate Him." One day, in New York, an American capitalist and art collector named Recktall Brown proposes a Faustian bargain: Wyatt will forge the work of Flemish Old Masters, and Brown will sell them for huge sums. Wyatt agrees to the deal, but after some early success he proves lacking in the necessary spinelessness. He considers resuming his religious studies, but when he goes home to New England he discovers that his father, a Protestant minister, has taken up Mithraism and lost his mind. Wyatt thereupon embarks on a long pilgrimage of sorts, first in New York, where he tries to expose his own forgeries, and later in Europe. He is last seen leaving a Spanish monastery, on page 900, intending, "at last, to live deliberately." Having surmounted the American Protestant suspicion of art and survived the dangerous attractions of the American Protestant marketplace, he seems finally on his way to being a real painter.

At the time, on the mountainside, I wasn't conscious of clinging to the parallels between Wyatt's story and my own situation: our weirdly isolated lives in lower Manhattan, our failed attempts to sell out, our extremely earnest doubts about art, our craving for penance, our crazy fathers. I was just happy to have a good, hard book to read, and I was impressed with myself for managing it. Following Wyatt's pilgrimage became my own pilgrimage. The loft, for those ten days, in spite of the gurgling pigeons, was the quietest place I've ever been. It was profoundly, metaphysically quiet. By the time I reached the last page of "The Recognitions," I felt readier to face the divorce, deaths, and dislocations that were waiting for me out in the sunlit world. I felt virtuous, as if I'd run three miles, eaten my kale, been to the dentist, filed my tax return, or gone to church.

One pretty good definition of college is that it's a place where people are made to read difficult books. Certainly, my own moments of peak collegiate learning occurred whenever I acquired new tools to unlock difficulty—when I was forced to figure out, all by myself, that Emily Dickinson sometimes meant the opposite of what her words said, or when my German professor asked us, with a mysterious grin, whether it was possible that Josef K. was *guilty*. To learn about irony, ambiguity, symbol, voice, and point of view, it made sense to read the most sophisticated texts.

Four years of sophistication had a cumulative effect. As a freshman, I thought it would be cool to make up stories for a living, to have that be my job, to see my name in print. By the time I was a senior, my ambition was to create literary Art. I took for granted that the greatest novels were tricky in their methods, resisted casual reading, and merited sustained study. I also assumed that the highest compliment this Art could be paid was to be taught in a university.

My parents didn't understand this. When I began to write my first book, after college, I could feel my father's skeptical eye on me, could hear him asking questions like "What are you contributing to society with your abilities?" In college, I'd admired Derrida and the Marxist and feminist critics, people whose job was to find fault with modern Systems. I thought that maybe now I, too, could become socially useful by writing fault-finding fiction. At the excellent public library in Somerville, Massachusetts, I identified a canon of intellectual, socially edgy white-male American fiction writers. The same names—Pynchon, DeLillo, Heller, Coover, Gaddis, Gass, Burroughs, Barth, Barthelme, Hannah, Hawkes, McElroy, and Elkin—kept showing up together in anthologies and in the respectful appraisals of contemporary critics. Though various in their styles, they all seemed to take as a given that something was new and strange and wrong about postwar America. They shared the postmodern suspicion of realism, summarized by the critic Jerome Klinkowitz: "If the world is absurd, if what passes for reality is distressingly unreal, why spend time representing it?"

To prove to myself, if not to my father, that I was engaged in a serious professional pursuit, I tried to join this guild. I was one of those skinny young men in scary glasses and thrift-store clothes whom you see on Boston or Brooklyn subways, young men who look like they possess massive amounts of data about small-label rock bands or avant-garde literature or video technology, the very size of these data-sets affording a kind of psychic protection. And Gaddis ought to have been my ideal. Gaddis, it was generally agreed, was the really smart, really angry, really forbidding Systems writer. "The Recognitions" was an ur-text of postwar fiction, both the granddaddy of difficulty and the first great cultural critique, which, even if Heller and Pynchon hadn't read it while composing "Catch-22" and "V.," managed to anticipate the spirit of both. Gaddis was the original intense, thrift-store-clad, monster-data-set young man whose ambition, if he let it show in public, would have singed his fellow subway riders' eyebrows.

My problem was that, with a few exceptions, notably Don DeLillo, I didn't particularly *like* the writers in my modern canon. I checked out their books (including "The Recognitions"), read a few pages, and returned them. I liked the *idea* of socially engaged fiction, I was at work on my own Systems novel of conspiracy and apocalypse, and I craved academic and hipster respect of the kind that Pynchon and Gaddis got and Saul Bellow and Ann Beattie didn't. But Bellow and Beattie, not to mention Dickens and Conrad and Brontë and Dostoyevsky and Christina Stead, were the writers I actually, unhiply enjoyed reading. If Coover's "The Public Burning" and Pynchon's "The Crying of Lot 49" moved me, it was mainly because I loved Coover's character Richard Nixon and Pynchon's Oedipa Maas. But postmodern fiction wasn't supposed to be about sympathetic characters. Characters, properly speaking, weren't even supposed to exist. Characters were feeble, suspect constructs, like the author himself, like the human soul. Nevertheless, to my shame, I seemed to need them.

It wasn't until the nineties, after I'd wasted a year on the screenplay, that I tried to rekindle my collegiate excitement about really hard books. I needed proof that I was a serious Artist, rather than the unwitting plagiarist of "Fun with Dick and Jane," and "The Recognitions" was perfect for the task. Reading the whole thing would also confer bragging rights. If somebody asked me if I'd read "The Sot-Weed Factor," I could shoot back, No, but have you read "The Recognitions"? And blow smoke from the muzzle of my gun.

In the event, nothing was as I'd expected. Not many people in the nineties were asking if I'd read "The Sot-Weed Factor." "The Recognitions," on the other hand—whether because of its virtues or because of the circumstances of my reading it—bowled me over. Its characters weren't sympathetic, but the wit and passion and seriousness of their creator were. I titled my third novel partly in homage to it.

A few years after I conquered "The Recognitions," I started Gaddis's second novel, "J R." I again bought the handsome Penguin paperback, and I devoted an hour or two each evening to reading it. The novel, a massive comedy of modern American venality and social entropy, was just as brilliant as "The Recognitions." Unfortunately, I no longer had the luxury or burden of entire days for reading. One night, I gave up in the middle of a four-page paragraph, and for the next few nights I was out late, and when I opened "J R" again I was lost. I set it aside, hoping to pick up the threads some other night. Two months later, I quietly reshelved it. The bookmark, a sassy Ticketmaster sleeve bearing an ad for "K-ROCK 92.3 FM (HOWARD STERN ALL MORNING / CLASSIC ROCK 'N' ROLL ALL DAY)," remained stuck on page 469, attesting to my defeat by "J R" or to "J R" 's defeat by my noisy life.

In Status terms, I'd simply failed as a reader. But I did have Contract on my side. I'd given the book weeks of evening reading, it still wasn't working for me, and now I was eager to read shorter, warmer books by James Purdy, Alice Munro, Penelope Fitzgerald, Halldór Laxness. Battling through "J R," I'd wanted to grab Gaddis by the lapels and shout, "Hello! I'm the reader you want! I love smart fiction, and I'm looking for a good Systems novel. If you can't even show *me* a good time, who else do you think is going to read you?"

But this only made it worse that I had quit. Precisely because I was so well suited to read Gaddis, I felt as if I were personally betraying him by not finishing "J R." From a Congregationalist childhood I'd gone straight to a collegiate worship of Art, without noticing the transition and without ever quite buying either faith. One day a secretary called from the Congregational church to ask if I still wanted to be a member, and I said no, and that was that. But it's much harder to leave a small, embattled cult than a mainstream suburban church. Nothing in my Congregational experience had prepared me for the fanatical fervor, the guilt-provoking authority, of Mr. Difficult.

MY FATHER'S CHILDHOOD

I used to bring the conductor his lunch pail
on the trolley that circled Mannheim

but I can't recall now if he was my father
or my father's brother who moved to California.

Maybe if he showed me his wounds . . .

Papa guarded French prisoners in the village
where we moved after he was shot down.

He had trouble breathing after the war.

Sometimes he marched them by our house
and sneaked them in for tea. My mother
made him keep his rifle in the hall.

Otto, she said, and he put his gun away.
Selma came from Enkirch, on the Moselle.

My brother Hans had curly red hair
that looked like a burning bush,
but I was the one who stuttered.

The prisoners sang sad French songs
and gave us pieces of chewing gum
because they missed their families.

I always liked those men who lost everything.

My father had a premonition about the Nazis
and he followed his cousins to Chicago.

There's something medieval Christian about "The Recognitions." The novel is like a huge landscape painting of modern New York, peopled with hundreds of doomed but energetic little figures, executed on wood panels by Brueghel or Bosch, and looking incongruously ancient beneath layers of yellowed lacquer. Even the blue skies in the book (the phrase "Another blue day" recurs as a despair-inducing leitmotiv) glow like oil-paint skies in an art museum beyond whose walls, forgotten, is the age of H-bombs and Army-McCarthy hearings in which the novel was written. The names dropped are Hans Memling, not Harry Truman; Paracelsus, not Elvis.

And yet the book is absolutely of the early fifties. Peel away the erudition, and you have "The Catcher in the Rye": a grim winter sojourn in a seedy Manhattan, a quest for authenticity in a phony modern world. Improvising on the theme of art forgery, Gaddis fills his novel with every conceivable variety of fraud, counterfeiter, poseur, and liar. Unlike Holden Caulfield, though, the main characters of "The Recognitions" participate in the

He was a spotter,
who never liked working in the dry cleaner's.

We lived in an Italian neighborhood
and I had to fight every day
on the way home from school.

I didn't know English at first
and we were refugees with something to prove.

Sometimes I crawled out my bedroom window
to keep the fight going.

I'd say God was a bully.

You know I can't call up one single word
of German, the bastards,

or the name of that village,

but I remember looking out a window
and seeing my mother standing in a garden.

This was before the expulsion.

I wonder if she ever liked cities.

She was barefoot.

Paradise lived under her feet.

—*Edward Hirsch*

phonyness themselves. The young literary poseur, Otto Pivner, is working on a play whose plot, he says, "still needs a little tightening up." The narrator glosses this lie in a tone that's fundamental to the novel, a tone at once unsparing and forgiving:

> (By this Otto meant that a plot of some sort had yet to be supplied, to motivate the series of monologues in which Gordon, a figure who resembled Otto at his better moments, and whom Otto greatly admired, said things which Otto had overheard, or thought of too late to say.)

Wyatt Gwyon may be the romantic projection of the author's artistic aspirations ("How ambitious you are!" his wife, Esther, unhappily exclaims), but it's Otto who seems to embody Gaddis's own confusion, humiliations, and disappointments. Otto's biography overlaps with Gaddis's—both grew up fatherless, both spent time in Central America and returned to New York via banana boat with their arms, though uninjured, in picturesque slings—and I suspect that the book owes some of its mood of playful fabulation to Gaddis's implication in his own satire.

The one genuine artist in "The Recognitions" is a devoutly Catholic young composer named Stanley. Throughout the book, Stanley is working on a requiem for organ which he hopes to play in a fragile old church in northern Italy. In the very last pages, as the novel circles back to Europe, Stanley travels to the church and, failing to understand the caretaker's warning against playing anything dissonant or too heavy on bass, begins to perform the requiem. The church collapses and kills him, and "The Recognitions" closes with some of its best-known lines: "most of his work was recovered too, and it is still spoken of, when it is noted, with high regard, though seldom played."

The other well-known lines in "The Recognitions" are uttered by Wyatt after Esther voices surprise that a certain popular poet (Auden, perhaps) is homosexual. Rejecting her interest in "personal things about writers and painters" as a prurient distraction, Wyatt bursts out:

> What is there left of him when he's done his work? What's any artist, but the dregs of his work? the human shambles that follows it around. What's left of the man when the work's done but a shambles of apology.

Gaddis portrays Esther as a "vagina dentata" eager to sleep with male artists and "absorb the properties which had been withheld from her." Wyatt retreats from her into coldness and abstraction, and Gaddis retreats from readers in much the same way—as if, for him, intercourse with the public were a pleasure that threatened to taint the purity of his motives. What mattered to Gaddis, who avowedly strove to write literature that would "last," was not the weak and fleshly artist but the afterlife. Although he had a family, many friends, and a busy social life in which he enjoyed literary gossip, he consistently denied his person to the public. Strict prohibitions like this are a way in which threatened religious minorities resist the seductions of the majority culture, and Gaddis in the fifties had Norman Mailer and Truman Capote as examples of writers who had been seduced. He chose, instead, to be a purist of his faith. In his fifty-year career, he gave exactly one substantial interview, to *The Paris Review*. He published one brief autobiographical essay. He gave no public readings.

Not that an excess of media attention was ever a big problem. "The

Recognitions" was published by Harcourt, Brace in 1955, with a marketing strategy of "Everyone is talking about this controversial book!" It received fifty-five reviews, an impressive number by today's standards, and, as William Gass notes in his introduction to the Penguin edition, "Only fifty-three of these notices were stupid." *The New Yorker* gave the book a brief, smirking dismissal ("words, words, words"); Dawn Powell, in the *Post,* offered up an error-riddled sneer. Sales were about five thousand in hardcover, not bad for a challenging first novel by an unknown writer. But the only prize the book won was for its design, and it quickly disappeared from public sight.

"I almost think that if I'd gotten the Nobel Prize when *The Recognitions* was published I wouldn't have been terribly surprised," Gaddis told *The Paris Review* in 1986, adding that the book's reception had been "sobering" and "humbling." Maybe if the novel had met with greater acclaim Gaddis would have relaxed a little; maybe Wyatt's "what is it they want" tirade, like his other puritanisms, would have been revealed as a skinny-young-man attitude to be outgrown. I doubt it, though. The book is *about* the everyday world's indifference to the superior reality of art. Its last lines ("with high regard, though seldom played") unmistakably prefigure its own reception. Nurturing the hope that your marginal novel will be celebrated by the mainstream—the Cassandra-like wish that people will thank you for telling them unwelcome truths—is a ritual way of insuring disappointment, of reaffirming your own world-denying status, of mortifying the flesh, of remaining, at heart, an angry young man. In the four decades following the publication of "The Recognitions," Gaddis's work grew angrier and angrier. It's a signature paradox of literary postmodernism: the writer whose least angry work was written first.

Some of Gaddis's rage appears to have been built-in. Born in 1922, he grew up with his mother in an old house in Massapequa, Long Island, and at a small Connecticut boarding school that he attended from the ages of five to thirteen. Five is young for boarding school, and five strikes me as a vital figure in Gaddis's biography. In "J R," an alter ego of Gaddis, an angry drinker named Jack Gibbs who was likewise sent to boarding school at the age of five, speaks of having "been in the way since the day I could walk," and he describes the loneliness of boarding school:

> End of the day alone on that train, lights coming on in those little Connecticut towns stop and stare out at an empty street corner dry cheese sandwich charge you a dollar wouldn't even put butter on it, finally pull into that desolate station scared to get off scared to stay on [. . .] school car waiting there like [. . .] a God damned open hearse think anybody expect to grow up.

Gaddis as a young man was a rowdy, a drinker. Kept from the war by a kidney ailment, he studied English at Harvard and became president of the *Lampoon,* but in his senior year he was expelled without a degree after a run-in with the Cambridge police. He then bounced around Europe, Latin America, and New York during the seven somewhat shadowy years he was at work on "The Recognitions." In the year of its publication, he married an actress, Pat Black, with whom he soon had two children. Here the mood of his biography abruptly changes, the foreign locales giving way to fifties commerce and suburban life with kids. Like Melville a century before him, Gaddis went to work for a living in lower Manhattan. He did public-relations writing for I.B.M., Eastman Kodak, Pfizer, and the United States Army, among others. (An evaluator at I.B.M., recommending a "simpler style" for one of his projects, complained that "the whole of the text is perhaps too much an impenetrable mass.") For twenty years, even as the country's literary tastes were swinging from the realism dominant in the fifties to the zanier modes of "Portnoy's Complaint" and "Catch-22," Gaddis essentially dropped out of sight. He started and abandoned a "novel on business" and a play about the Civil War. He smoked a lot and drank a lot. His first marriage ended when he was living in Croton-on-Hudson, New York. Not until the end of the sixties did he scrape together enough grant money to return full time to the novel about business.

By the time the book was published, in 1975, the country's mood had caught up with him. "J R" received major and admiring review attention and won the National Book Award. The chunky paperback edition with its chunky title lettering was, like Patti Smith LPs and the "Moosewood Cookbook," a common sight in the secondhand stores and student-slum apartments of my college years. The spine of "J R" was often suspiciously uncracked, however, or a strangely low used price was pencilled inside the cover, or the bookmark, which might be a sheet of rolling paper or a Talking Heads ticket stub, could be found on page 118, or 19, or 53, because Gaddis's fiction was, if anything, more difficult than ever. "J R" is a seven-hundred-and-twenty-six-page novel consisting almost entirely of overheard voices, with nary a quotation mark, no conventional narration of any kind, no "later that same evening," no "meanwhile in New York," not a single chapter break, not even a section break, but thousands of dashes and ellipses, another cast of dozens, and a laughably complicated plot based on Wagner's Ring and centered on a multimillion-dollar business empire owned and operated by an eleven-year-old Long Island schoolboy named J R Vansant.

J R is the grubby kid you have to laugh at because he's not old enough to hate, the preadolescent whose entire being is devoted to wanting stuff and to trading it for other, better stuff. First he does it with a classmate:

> —Boy, what crap. That's all you've got is crap. What's this.
>
> —It's this club you can join if I recommend you.
>
> —What kind of club.
>
> —It's this club, see? You step inside and suddenly excitement surrounds you! You enter a world highlighted by the soft, flickering glow of open-hearth fireplaces . . . the attentive rustle of beautiful Bunnies—

Soon enough, he's trading with captains of industry. Early in the novel, J R's sixth-grade teacher takes the class to Wall Street to buy one share of Diamond Cable stock and "learn how our system works." While the class's new stock is losing ten per cent of its value in a few hours, and brokers and corporate

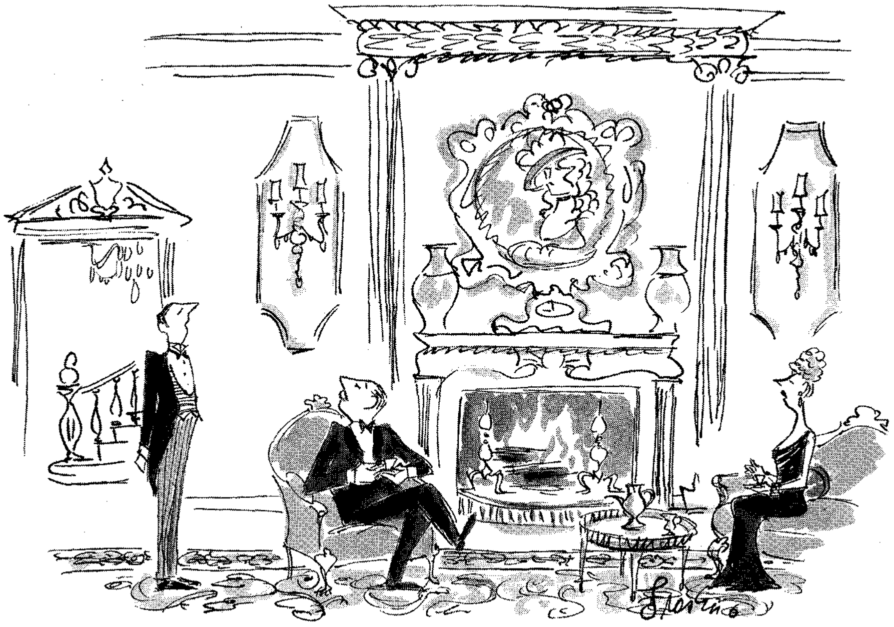
"What might you have written that I might say I've read?"

• •

officers are engaging in vile manipulations of markets and senators and foreign governments, and a corporate P.R. flak is laying on the smarm ("you and your other fellow Americans no longer play a passive part in our nation's great economy"), J R is studying the bylaws of Diamond Cable, asking dead-on questions like "What's a warrant?" and "What's that minus sign two and an eighth?" and ascertaining that the class's share of stock entitles it to file a shareholder's lawsuit. Within weeks, by threatening such a suit and accepting a cash settlement, J R, who conducts his business on a pay phone at the middle school, acquires his working capital. He buys a million and a half Navy-surplus wooden picnic forks, a bankrupt textile mill in upstate New York, and then an outward-spiralling galaxy of dubious concerns—a brewery, a printer, a publisher, a nursing home, a mortuary. Like his creator, J R is an obsessive. (Also like Gaddis, J R has no visible father. His mother is a busy nurse.) He pursues what his country teaches him is worth pursuing. He's devoid of charm, compassion, and scruples, but he doesn't know any better, and so you root for him against the novel's many corporate and legal sharks, who should know better but behave just as badly. "J R" anticipates Jonathan Lebed, the alleged teen-age market manipulator in New Jersey. It predicts the S. & L. crises and corporate raiders of the eighties ("Because like what good is this here pension fund doing just sitting there," J R wonders, "if we can like put it to work for them to get this here acquisition, you know?"), and it nicely demolishes President Bush's claim that Wall Street greed was an anomaly of the nineties.

The most sincere adult in the novel is, again, a young composer, a sweetheart named Edward Bast, whom J R dragoons into serving as the front man for his conglomerate. While Bast spends his days helping other characters (nobody, of course, helps him), the opera that he wants to compose is gradually scaled back to a cantata, to a piece for small orchestra, and, finally, to a piece for solo cello. The novel's maddening distractions recall the frustrations of Kafka's fiction; you can sense an author nightmarishly unable to find a quiet space to work. Bast tries to compose music in a Manhattan pied-à-terre that's a bitter cartoon of entropy; two broken faucets spew hot water day and night, the only clock runs backward, the rooms are piled high with boxes of unidentified crap, a never located radio dribbles nonsense, and bushels of junk mail keep arriving for J R, who has sent Bast a mechanized envelope opener that slices letters in half. In another part of town, Thomas Eigen, a P.R. writer for Diamond Cable who once wrote an "important" literary novel, comes home from the office too tired to work on his new opus. The apartment is a mess, his wife is angry, and his little boy insists that he play a board game:

> —You got in the Heffalump's trap. Mama Papa got in the Heffalump trap. Mama?
> —She can't hear you David. Don't shout.
> —If I get red now I'll, yellow. I got yellow



"Beg pardon, sir, there is a wolf at the door."

too look, I always win look, now look where I am and...

—David you don't always win, nobody...

—I won Mama four times today. Mama?

—Stop shouting David... He held the bag down, —and I... got...

—Black! You peeked. Papa you peeked!

—Peeked?

"J R" is written for the active reader. You're well advised to carry a pencil with which to flag plot points and draw flow charts on the inside back cover. The novel is a welter of dozens of interconnecting scams, deals, seductions, extortions, and betrayals. Between scenes, when the dialogue yields briefly to run-on sentences whose effect is like a blurry handheld video or a speeded-up movie, the images that flash by are of denatured, commercialized landscapes—trees being felled, fields paved over, roads widened—that recall to the modern reader how aesthetically shocking postwar automotive America must have been, how dismaying and portentous the first strip malls, the first five-acre parking lots.

Indeed, one defense of Gaddis and his difficulty is that conventional fiction, driven by substantial characters and based on a soul-to-soul Contract between reader and writer, was simply inadequate to the social and technological crises that twentieth-century writers saw developing all around them. Both the moderns and the postmoderns resorted to a kind of literature of emergency. The moderns employed new, self-conscious methods to address the new reality and preserve the vanishing old one. The postmodern enterprise was even more radical: to resist absorption or coöptation by an all-absorbing, all-coöpting System. Closure was the enemy, and the way to avoid it was to refuse to participate in the System. For Pynchon this meant flight and paranoia; for Burroughs it meant transgression. For Gaddis it meant being very angry—so angry that, at a certain point, he stopped making sense. Halfway through "J R," I bailed out. As one of his ex-followers, I wonder: Did I betray him, or did he betray me?

One frequent problem with the literature of emergency is that it doesn't age well. In the fifties and sixties, Gaddis and his cohort sounded alarms about the emergence of a world in which we've now been living for decades. Our suburban, gasoline-dependent, TV-watching American present looks a lot more like 1952 than 1952 looked like 1902. As the decades pass, the postmodern program, the notion of formal experimentation as an act of resistance, begins to seem seriously misconceived.

Fiction is the most fundamental human art. Fiction is storytelling, and our reality arguably consists of the stories we tell about ourselves. Fiction is also conservative and conventional, because the structure of its market is relatively democratic (novelists make a living one book at a time, bringing pleasure to large audiences), and because a novel asks for ten or twenty hours of solitary attentiveness from each member of its audience. You can walk past a painting fifty times before you begin to appreciate it. You can drift in and out of a Bartók sonata until its structures dawn on you, but a difficult novel just sits there on your shelf unread—unless you happen to be a student, in which case you're obliged to turn the pages of Woolf and Beckett. This may make you a better reader. But to wrest the novel away from its original owner, the bourgeois reader, requires strenuous effort from theoreticians. And once literature and its criticism become co-dependent the fallacies set in.

For example, the Fallacy of Capture, as in the frequent praise of "Finnegans Wake" for its "capturing" of human consciousness, or in the justification of "J R" 's longueurs by its "capture" of an elusive "postwar American reality"; as if a novel were primarily an ethnographic recording, as if the point of reading fiction were not to go fishing but to admire somebody else's catch. Or the Fallacy of the Symphonic, in which a book's motifs and voices are described as "washing over" the reader in orchestral fashion; as if, when you're reading "J R," its pages just turn themselves, words wafting up into your head like arpeggios. Or the Fallacy of Art Historicism, a pedagogical convenience borrowed from the moneyed world of visual art, where a work's value substantially depends on its novelty; as if fiction were as formally free as painting, as if what makes "The Great Gatsby" and "O Pioneers!" good novels were primarily their technical innovations. Or the epidemic Fallacy of the Stupid Reader, implicit in every modern "aesthetics of difficulty," wherein difficulty is a "strategy" to protect art from coöptation and the purpose of this art is to "upset" or "compel" or "challenge" or "subvert" or "scar" the unsuspecting reader; as if the writer's audience somehow consisted, again and again, of Charlie Browns running to kick Lucy's football; as if it were a virtue in a novelist to be the kind of boor who propagandizes at friendly social gatherings.

It's unfortunate for Gaddis that so many of his friends, scholars, and defenders participate in these fallacies. Joseph Tabbi, the editor of Gaddis's essays and a true believer in subversive difficulty, thinks that the Apocalypse—the death of the individual, the triumph of the System—is not merely imminent, it has already occurred without your even realizing it, so don't blame the orphic Gaddis for his inaccessibility. Tabbi's apologies are a nice example of five-alarm avant-gardism:

> Gaddis's audience has been limited in part because readers trained on nineteenth-century realism miss in his work those signs and conventional symptoms by which characters may be recognized, too readily, as rounded and whole. Such conventional characters are agents within a bourgeois and industrial world that is now, in the United States, largely historical.

If you're having a good time with a novel, you're a dupe of the postindustrial System; if you still identify with characters, you need to retake Postmodernism 101. William Gass, in his introduction to "The Recognitions," names the childish thing that it's time to put behind us: "Too often we bring to literature the bias for 'realism' we were normally brought up with." Gass's defense of difficulty complements Tabbi's, but with greater sophistry and alliteration. "If the author works at his work," Gass writes, "the reader may also have to, whereas when a writer whiles away both time and words, the reader may relax and gently peruse." Gaddis's fiction could have used fewer friends like this and better enemies. Even Steven Moore, a Gaddis scholar whose criticism is a model of clarity and intelligent advocacy, lets his enthusiasm get the better of him. "J R," for Moore, is a "lean and economical" book, because its inferential, all-dialogue form forces readers to supply missing descriptions and information; the purpose of a novel being, I suppose, to capture and efficiently store data.

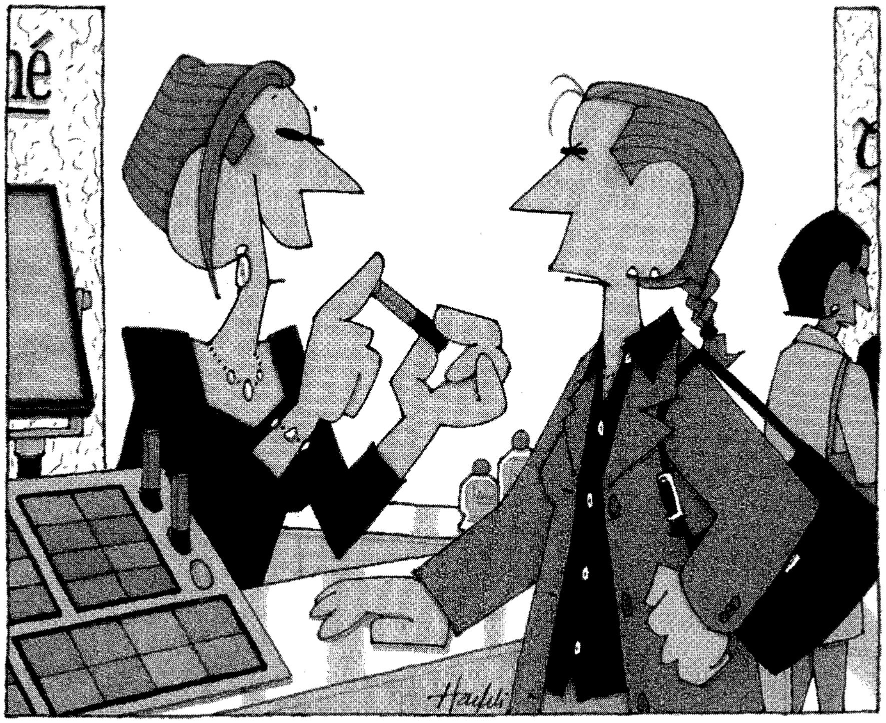
My small hope for literary criticism would be to hear less about orchestras and capturings and more about the erotic and culinary arts. Think of the novel as lover: Let's stay home tonight and have a great time. Just because you're touched where you want to be touched, it doesn't mean you're cheap; before a book can change you, you have to love it. Or the novelist as the cook who prepares, as a gift to the reader, this many-course meal. It's not all ice cream, but sautéed broccoli rabe has charms of its own.

Difficult fiction of the kind epitomized by Gaddis seems to me more closely associated with the lower end of the digestive tract. His detractors refer to his "logorrhea," but it's more accurate to characterize him as retentive—constipated to the point of being unreadable, sometimes even unintelligible. Edmund Wilson, in his Freudian phase, identified the playwright Ben Jonson as a classic anal-retentive writer, obsessed with excretion, money, lists, seedy underworlds, arcane words, obscure references. Wilson suggested that the best writers trust their talents, and he contrasted Jonson's cramped output with that of his friend and rival Shakespeare, whose "open and free nature" Jonson himself praised. "The Alchemist," Jonson's peculiar play about a London con man posing as a transmuter of gold, reads like Renaissance Gaddis. Both writers stuff far too many swindles into their plots, and for both of them money is the world's shit (Recktall Brown!), at once fascinating and repellent.

If I'm sounding a little Freudian myself, it's because the first lines of page 523, the terminus of my second reading of "J R," look so much like impacted excreta:

> across smalltite traces and has Nonny put in for a mineral depletion allowance tipped his hand to the FDA coming down hard on cobalt safety levels now Milliken jumps in to protect home industry only thing they had besides sheep and Indians till he suddenly gets the idea his state is

Lean and economical? "J R" suffers from the madness it attempts to resist. The first ten pages and the last ten pages and every ten pages in between bring the "news" that American life is shallow, fraudulent, venal, and hostile to artists. But there never has been and never will be a reader who is unpersuaded of this "news" on page 10 but persuaded on page 726. The novel becomes as chilly, mechanistic, and exhausting as the System it describes. Its world is ruled by corporate white men who pursue their work with pleasureless zeal, casually sideline women and minorities, and invent difficult insider languages to discourage newcomers: how oddly like the book itself! (And how odd that Gaddis and his academic admirers reject Christian Puritanism only to demand that his readers renounce the sinful pleasures of realism and cultivate a selfless and pure love of Art!) Even the fascination of J R Vansant wanes by mid-novel. J R is an avatar of Bart Simpson, but Bart is incompara-



"Yes, it was tested on rabbits and they simply adored it."

bly better suited to our cultural environment than J R is. Even the best gags in "J R" wear you out before you're done with them. On "The Simpsons," the gags hit their target, the target feels pain, and next week there's a new episode.

The curious thing is that I suspect Gaddis himself would rather have watched "The Simpsons." I suspect that if anyone else had written his later novels, from "J R" onward, he would not have wanted to read them, and that if he had read them he would not have liked them. Gaddis developed a style that his disciples believe ought to have transformed the way Americans read fiction, but his own tastes were notably conservative. He had particular disdain for modern art. For the cover of his fourth novel, "A Frolic of His Own" (1994), he chose an abstract painting by his daughter, Sarah, without mentioning on the jacket that she'd painted it when she was five: "See, any child *can* paint like that." Steven Moore, no doubt with the best of intentions, has assembled an impressive list of what Gaddis did and didn't like to read. Basically, he didn't like art fiction. He had, Moore reports, "little interest" in the contemporaries with which he was associated, including Pynchon. "In general," Moore concludes, he seemed "more likely to pick up a novel like Jay McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City* (which he found 'very funny') than novels as challenging as his own."

To serve the reader a fruitcake that you wouldn't eat yourself, to build the reader an uncomfortable house you wouldn't want to live in: this violates what seems to me the categorical imperative for any fiction writer. This is the ultimate breach of Contract.

If "J R" is dedicated to the proposition that America sucks, the message of his third novel, "Carpenter's Gothic" (1985), is that it really, really, really sucks. Gaddis himself conceded that the book was "an exercise in style," and its content is strictly paint-by-numbers. A telegenic Southern preacher turns out to be—a dangerous, venal hypocrite! A United States senator turns out to be—corrupt! The book is a husk. Unlike "The Recognitions," it was handsomely reviewed.

Gaddis's last real novel, "A Frolic of His Own," rambles on for nearly six hundred pages in illustration of how a system designed to create order (American law) can end up sponsoring disorder. The book is ideal for graduate study. It makes a banal but unexceptionable social point (we litigate too much in America), it's riddled with motifs, quotations, stories within stories, and countless allusions to Gaddis's own earlier works and other famous texts (better brush up on your Plato and Longfellow), and its only aesthetic weakness, really, is that much of it is repetitive, incoherent, and insanely boring. This novel, of course, got the warmest reviews of any of Gaddis's books, and was given one of those unofficial lifetime-achievement National Book Awards.

The best parts of "Frolic" are the legal opinions and the characterizations. Creating a character entirely through dialogue is like boxing with one arm behind your back, and I'm not persuaded by the Gaddistic argument that straining our imaginations makes a character any more real to us. (In fact, the work of reading Gaddis makes me wonder if our brains might even be hard-wired for conventional storytelling, structurally eager to form pictures from sentences as featureless as "She stood up.") Still, his inferentially drawn characters can be vivid. Oscar Crease is a fifty-something amateur playwright and part-time professor in whose disorderly person a comically large number of lawsuits intersect. He lives in the large old house of his childhood on Long Island, hopelessly surrounded by a lifetime's worth of miscellaneous papers: another cartoon of entropy. Functionally, Oscar is a baby. He spends much of the novel in a wheelchair, forever pawing at his girlfriend's blouse, trying to get his hands and mouth on her breasts, and sucking down wine day and night.

In "The Recognitions," a son grows up and vanishes. "Carpenter's Gothic," the book without children, is a book without hope. At the center of the other

"Now who's paranoid?"

two novels is a very large child. In "Frolic," it's the selfish, unreasonable, self-pitying, incapable, insatiable Oscar, a pig in the role of king, a suffering artist who (ha ha!) happens to have little talent. Oscar claims your sympathy only to abuse it. His long play about the Civil War is obviously and unfunnily bad, but a hundred pages are devoted to reproducing the manuscript and another fifty to endless jawing about its relation to art, justice, and order. The novel is an example of the particular corrosiveness of literary postmodernism. Gaddis began his career with a Modernist epic about the forgery of masterpieces. He ended it with a pomo romp that superficially resembles a masterpiece but punishes the reader who tries to stay with it and follow its logic. When the reader finally says, Hey, wait a minute, this is a mess, not a masterpiece, the book instantly morphs into a performance-art prop: its fraudulence is the whole point! And the reader is out twenty hours of good-faith effort.

Regarding Gaddis's two posthumously published books, I feel the way I did when my father was in a nursing home. Unless you're a very good old friend, it's better not to see him suffering like this. The title of Gaddis's last novel, "Agapē Agape," comes from a tonally arch and intellectually dubious essay that he once wrote about player pianos and mechanization in the arts. The book is mainly a free-form rant, however, *with the sentences, yes, run the sentences, run together, make it choppy, even easier than it looks but no what no, what matters is the art.* An unnamed novelist lies dying, his body a wreck that has betrayed his spirit. He reproaches himself for his failures, denounces the populist "herd" for misunderstanding him, and worries that he's perceived as a mere "cartoon." But a cartoon is what "Agapē Agape" is: one opaque, obsessive, citation-riddled, solipsistic paragraph deifying "the work" as "the only refuge" from one's painful humanity. The novel did manage to stab me with its final note, a note reminiscent of Gaddis's early dreams of a Nobel Prize—

> That was Youth with its reckless exuberance when all things were possible pursued by Age where we are now, looking back at what we destroyed, what we tore away from that self who could do more, and its work that's become my enemy because that's what I can tell you about, that Youth who could do anything

—but I was moved for the very reasons that Gaddis denigrated throughout his career: because I was touched by the human shambles. I was thinking of the artist, not the art.

If you're still wondering if you missed something, some key to Gaddis that will unlock his difficulty, you can set your mind at rest by reading "The Rush for Second Place," a slender collection of his essays and occasional writings. Here you'll learn that Gaddis can't finish even a short nonfiction piece without breaking into a rant. You'll find essays consisting of strung-together quotes that you have to read carefully, twice, before you conclude that no argument (or, indeed, logic) is hidden in the string. You'll see that, sure enough, literary difficulty can operate as a smoke screen for an author who has nothing interesting, wise, or entertaining to say. You'll find not one reference to the pleasure of reading fiction. You'll learn, rather, that Gaddis believed that novels should improve the world—that good fiction is not about "the way things are" but about "the way things should be." You'll learn that the phrase "agapē agape" refers to his belief that the world of Contract, the American world of dollars and machines, has ripped apart the charitable love (*agapē*) to which early-Christian communities aspired.

Or something like that—it's a little unclear. I imagine Gaddis's disciples wagging their fingers at me, telling me I'm another Stupid Reader, explaining that the essays subvert my expectations of clarity, of pleasure, of edification; that I haven't got the joke yet. They have postmodern apologies for his difficulty, such as this one by Gregory Comnes:

> The narrative enactment of this epistemology shows readers how hard work is a necessary precondition for having meaning in narrative by forcing readers to participate actively in the construction of narrative meaning, requiring them to bring information to the text to read what was never written.

They tell me, in other words, that I just need to *work a little bit harder.* To which I can only reply that there is no headache like the headache you get from working harder on deciphering a text than the author, by all appearances, has worked on assembling it; and that I'm beginning to get that headache.

And beginning, as well, to sound like Mrs. M——?

Like many other Contract-minded Americans, like the literary societies of a hundred years ago, like the book clubs of today, I understand that the Contract sometimes calls for work. I know the pleasures of a book aren't always easy. I expect to work; I *want* to work. It's also in my Protestant nature, however, to expect some reward for this work. And, although critics can give me pastoral guidance as I seek this reward, ultimately I think each individual is alone with his or her conscience. As a reader, I seek a direct personal relationship with art. The books I love, the books on which my faith in literature rests, are the ones with which I can have this kind of relationship. "The Recognitions," to my surprise, turned out to be a book like this.

After "The Recognitions," however, something happened to Gaddis. Something went haywire. Whether it's true or not, I tell myself a story about a five-year-old boy who was "in the way," about a skinny young man who, like Hamlet inscribing his stepfather's villainy on his brain, assembled an encyclopedia of phonyness unparalleled in literature. He confided his faith and hope to a nine-hundred-and-fifty-six-page-thick vault, and he gave the grownup world one chance to recognize him. When the world, inevitably, failed this test, he took his talent to the archetypically phony work of corporate P.R., as if to say, "You'll never catch me hoping again." The modern cry of pain became the postmodern bitter joke. The corporate P.R. work was vile, but at least he was conscious of its vileness. Indeed, the essence of postmodernism is an adolescent fear of getting taken in, an adolescent conviction that all systems are phony. The theory is compelling, but as a way of life it's a recipe for rage. The child grows enormous but never grows up.

I think there's a good story in this. To the extent that I believe it's the story of Gaddis himself, it softens my anger with him, dissolves it in sadness. A Gaddis like this is not remotely a cartoon, and a story like this would never fit into a "Simpsons" format. A story like this, where the difficulty is the difficulty of life itself, is what a novel is for. ♦

FICTION

BODIES

BY JESSICA SHATTUCK

In the fluorescent light of the refrigerator, the halved parsnips look naked—pale and fleshy as limbs. Annie pauses before pulling them out. A refrigerator is like a hospital, a bright place that is not cheerful. A protective but uncertain place to wait.

"What are you doing?" Anthony says. He's standing in the doorway.

"Starting dinner," Annie says, flicking on the lights. They both blink in the sudden brilliance.

Anthony climbs up onto one of the tall stools on the other side of the kitchen island. He is five years old, blond, and freckled, with close-set blue eyes. Something about his mouth and his stubby but prominent little nose hints already at the old man he will be—stubborn, soft-spoken, a little unforgiving.

The music of "The Lion King" drifts toward them from the playroom.

"Not in the mood for the movie?" Annie asks.

Anthony shrugs and lays his head down on his outstretched arm.

Annie dabs small pieces of butter on the parsnips, draining water from the dish. Outside the window, twenty stories below, there is a bright stream of traffic on Fifth Avenue. Beyond that, Central Park is black—lit paths twist through it like constellations. She rinses beans, wraps bread in aluminum foil, rubs garlic and pepper on steaks, washes the pretty purple-and-white salad leaves whose name she can never remember. She and Anthony are comfortable with silence. When she first moved in with his family, he made her nervous. He is an intense child, with a sharp, scrutinizing gaze, and his frankness can be almost cruel. Annie tried to protect herself with chatter, elaborately inventive games, even bribes. But they are friends now. She feels more at home around Anthony than around anyone else she knows.

"Will you read to me?" Anthony asks after the steaks are in the broiler and the beans are steaming on the stove.

Annie looks at the clock. "For five minutes," she says.

"Yes, yes, yes," he chants, sitting up straight now.

Annie is in what her doctor refers to as the "hunker down and wait" period of treatment for Stage III Hodgkin's lymphoma. For the most part, she has been lucky. She has gone through ten remarkably smooth cycles of chemotherapy; the success has yet to be determined, but the side effects have been mild. Her straight, pale-brown hair is thinner, but she still has it. Though she needs at least twelve hours of sleep a day, she is not constantly exhausted. She takes her pills every morning—vitamins, herbs a Chinese doctor prescribed, green algae. She eats kale and radishes and drinks a full gallon and a half of water a day. She lives like someone who has built a home on the San Andreas Fault: she takes what small, possibly ridiculous precautions she can, and then chooses not to think about it.

Until November, Annie worked as a secretary for Anthony's mother, Cleo. Cleo is the creative director of a large international advertising agency—the first woman in the company's history to have this role. She is tall and levelheaded and big-boned, but glamorous. She works fifteen hours a day, and most weekends as well. She is an adept psychoanalyst of the public mind. "That'll make people think of getting old. People don't want to think of getting old," she'll say about a mockup of an ad for a real-estate Web site. Suddenly everyone will realize that the little boy bouncing his ball down the walk into his grandmother's garden reminds them of their lost childhoods—of time passing, of old dreams, and of dying. Cleo will substitute a girl for the boy, an older brother for the grandmother, and it will become an entirely different story. Annie would like to crawl into Cleo's confidence and curl up in her powerful vision of the world as an infinitely malleable, manageable place.

Annie's own days at the agency have been put on indefinite hold, and she misses them—the feeling of purpose and efficiency. Now she lives with Cleo and her family in their penthouse on Fifth Avenue, which has lots of extra room. It is a perfect arrangement, really; Annie did not have many people she could move in with when she got sick. There was her high-school sweetheart, who is now her ex-husband, in San Diego, and her brother, Todd, in Long Beach. But the last time she saw Todd he locked her in the closet and broke a bottle against the door. And her ex-husband has found God.

Besides, Cleo and her husband, Jay, need someone in addition to their babysitter to look after their two children. Mrs. Tibbs, they worry, will teach the children bad grammar and imperfect diction. Now Annie reads them stories and plays interesting, educational games, and is careful to choose her words exactly, hold on to silent "g" 's, never say "gonna" or use "real" as an adjective. She is used to this from the office—the only difference is that it is no longer a work-related necessity but something she has to do at home, because that is what Cleo and Jay's apartment has become.

Annie has made it to page 5 of "Goodnight Moon," Anthony's favorite book, when the doorbell rings. "No," Anthony says, putting his hand on her hip as she starts to get up. "No." He is clingy and uncertain in the evenings.

"I have to get the door," Annie says gently. "It might be important."

But it is Cleo's niece Michele, who lives with her mother, Cleo's sister, two buildings down.

"Hi," Michele says with a bright, insincere smile. "Is Cleo home yet?" She peers over Annie's shoulder into the apartment as if Annie might not be trusted to tell the truth. Michele's mother drifts in and out of rehab programs, and Cleo worries about her niece. She is a beautiful girl: blond, long-legged, with perfectly straight, well-proportioned features. Tonight she is wearing a short, hot-pink skirt and impossibly high platform heels. Around Michele, Annie feels dumpy, prudish, and overwhelmingly average—average height (five feet five), average prettiness (small nose, brown eyes, and pale skin), average age (thirty-two), and average-sized breasts (34B). She remembers that she has not showered in two days, that her sweater is pilly, that her jeans are baggy at the knees.

"Not yet," she says. "Would you like to come in and wait for her?"

"Story!" Anthony demands from the couch.

Annie hopes Michele will say no.

"I can't," Michele says. "I'm on my way downtown, but I wanted to give her this." She holds out a thick silver-paper envelope with writing in metallic gold. "My sweet-sixteen party. At Au Bar," she adds, unable to restrain herself.

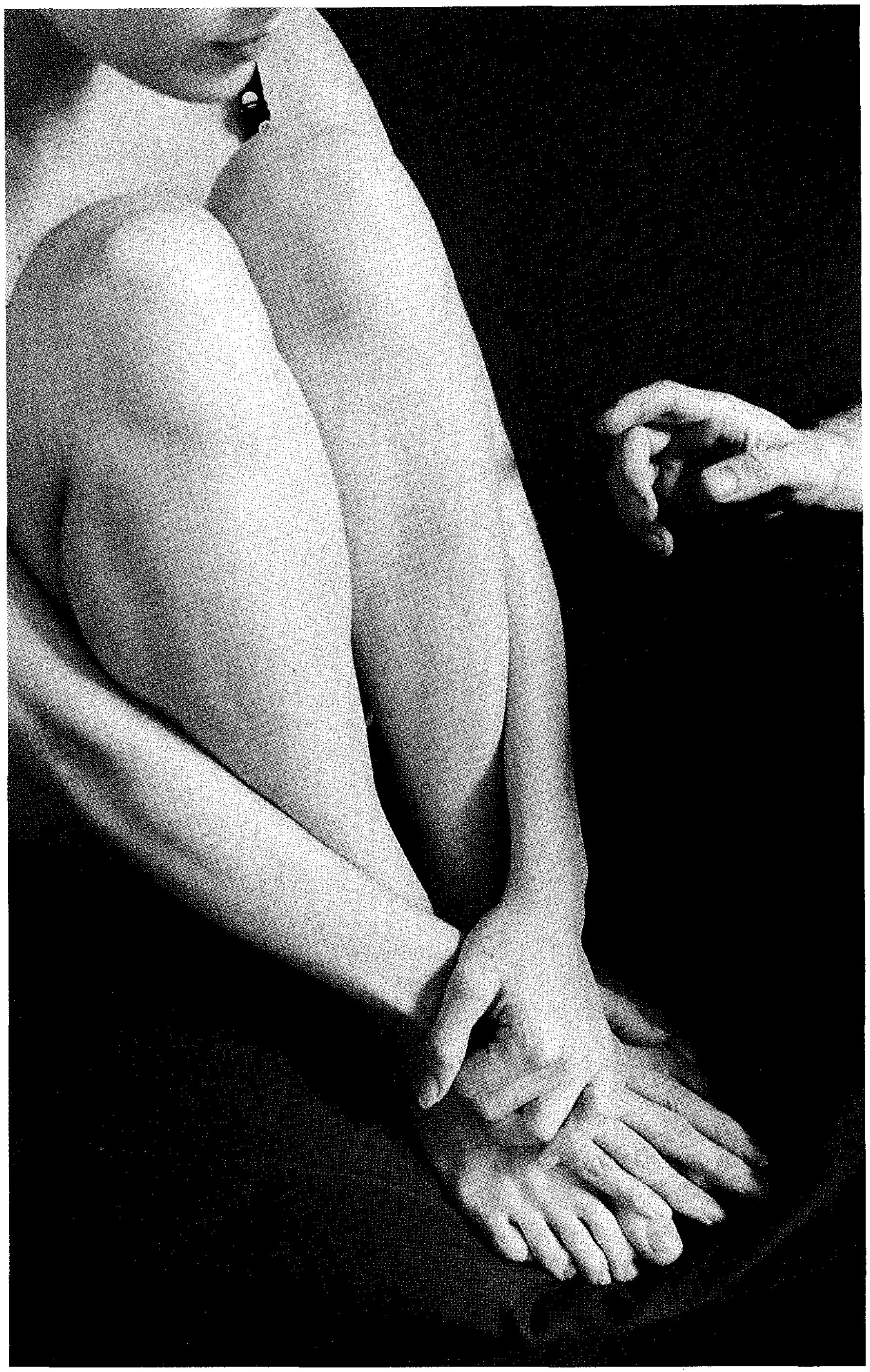
"Ooh," Annie says, "that'll be nice," hoping this is an appropriate response. But it sounds fraudulent, schoolteacherish. "I'll give it to her."

"Thanks," Michele breathes, and flashes another studied smile. "Say hi to Jay."

Annie closes the door behind her and walks back over to Anthony.

"O.K.," she says, settling onto the sofa. "Where were we?"

"Here," Anthony says, squirming closer, collapsing against her as soon as she leans back. She is thankful for his helplessness.



ELINOR CARUCCI, "ERAN ALMOST TOUCHES ME" (1999)/RICCO/MARESCA GALLERY

Since it is Thursday night, they are all eating together. This is Cleo's rule. Sundays and Thursdays, they dine at seven so that Anthony and his baby sister, Eden, can join them and afterward Cleo can put them to bed. On other nights, Cleo and Jay eat late, or have dinner engagements, or, often, Cleo is out of town. Tonight, Cleo has brought pink and orange dahlias home from the florist on Madison, which Annie has arranged in the center of the table. In the candlelight, they project pointed orange shadows onto the walls.

"What did you do, invite Alain Ducasse over to cook?" Jay says, surveying the food. "This looks fantastic." Jay is tall and in his early forties. He is technically good-looking, but there is something about him that seems still unformed, as if he had never, for even a moment, experienced pain.

"Abble, abble, abble, abble," Eden chants from her high chair. Saliva runs down her lower lip.

"Did you work out with Mel today?" Cleo asks Jay, wiping Eden's chin with her napkin. Mel is Jay's trainer. "I thought that was Monday, Wednesday, Friday."

"Bumped it up—Thursdays, too," Jay says, helping himself to a steak. Jay sold his Internet company for "a bundle," as he likes to say, before the market went bust, and since then he has devoted himself to "independent projects," which originally consisted of learning to play the guitar, writing a how-to (in his case, how to sell your startup company for millions) book, and getting in shape. Now his projects consist entirely of getting in shape—kick-boxing class, weight lifting, training for the New York marathon. In the four months since Annie moved in with them, he has gone way past "in shape." His muscles, which are by nature invisible, have become hard and round and move like an

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"Four times a week?" Cleo asks, her eyebrows raised.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Jay demands.

"Nothing," Cleo says. "Did you have a chance to call the Hornbys?"

Cleo is so smooth. Jay will have to run after this question now. He is volatile, but easily distracted. Annie has seen him agitated, cranky, even nasty a few times, but she has never seen Cleo so much as ruffled.

"They're coming on Saturday." Jay turns to Anthony and tousles his hair. "With Davey-boy, so you'll have a friend, too."

"I don't like him," Anthony says, slumping back in his chair.

"But he's your buddy," Jay says with a mixture of surprise and disappointment. "He's a good guy."

"Why not?" Cleo asks at the same time.

Anthony grunts and kicks the table leg. Annie has begun to notice that he is different with Cleo. Less communicative. More petulant. Gently, Annie stills his leg under the table.

"Na, na, na, na," Eden begins chanting. She has been released from her high chair and is crawling around under the table. Then she sits down and begins sucking on the remote control of Jay's new stereo.

"She loves to put things in her mouth," Annie says, removing the remote control gently from Eden's grasp.

"Well!" Jay says, standing up. "Just like your mother, aren't you?" He laughs and wiggles one of Eden's fat toes.

"Could you get the salt while you're up?" Cleo asks, with no hint that she has heard.

Annie suspects that Cleo and Jay have a wild and theatrical sex life. There is all of Jay's working out. There are his crass jokes. There is the way he smells when he comes into the kitchen for breakfast before showering. But these are merely complements of something Annie sees in Cleo. She is too confident, too invulnerable to be seductive. But when she is relaxed, when she and Jay come in from an evening out at a benefit, or a day of sailing on the Sound, there is something raw about her—a loose, substantial physicality that reminds Annie of a high-school athlete. It is slightly masculine. Unabashedly sexual.

The first time Annie thought about this, an image of Cleo, bent over, her brown hair trailing on the floor, popped into her mind. She was being fucked from behind. She was wearing a bustier and garters, and her wide pale feet with their unpainted toenails looked inanimate. The image was so vivid that Annie almost can't remember whether she has actually seen it. She imagines that Cleo likes frilly nighties in little-girl colors. That Jay, with his newly built body, comes out of the bathroom shirtless, in black briefs. That Cleo is coy, that Jay will do anything to get a blow job—David Hasselhoff impersonations, handsprings, a wrestling move in which he pins Cleo roughly against the headboard. It is both comical and dangerous. And Annie is shocked at how readily it springs into her imagination.

"Stop doing dishes," Cleo says, coming into the kitchen from the children's room. "Mrs. Tibbs will do those in the morning. You have better things to do."

"I like doing dishes," Annie says.

"Anthony would like you to go in and give him a kiss goodnight."

Annie tries to interpret Cleo's voice. Lately, when Cleo wants to read Anthony a story, he says no, he'd rather have Annie. Cleo turns it into a joke—you're a more fun mommy than I am, she says. But here, alone in the kitchen, Annie feels tension spring up between them like a wire. It makes Annie nervous; beneath Cleo's unflappable exterior, Annie has noticed lately, she has a capacity for cruelty.

"O.K." Annie wipes her hand on the dish towel and adds, "I feel a little woozy," which she does not, as if somehow this could make things equal.

Anthony's bedroom is at the far end of the apartment, across the darkened living room with its glass doors that lead out to a roof garden and the hollow rush of the city. Anthony is lying on his back, staring at the glow-in-the-dark stars Jay arranged on the ceiling in the shape of a baseball. "I knew you'd come," he says, turning onto his side as soon as she opens the door.

"Well, you asked for me, right?" Annie says gently. She sits down on the edge of

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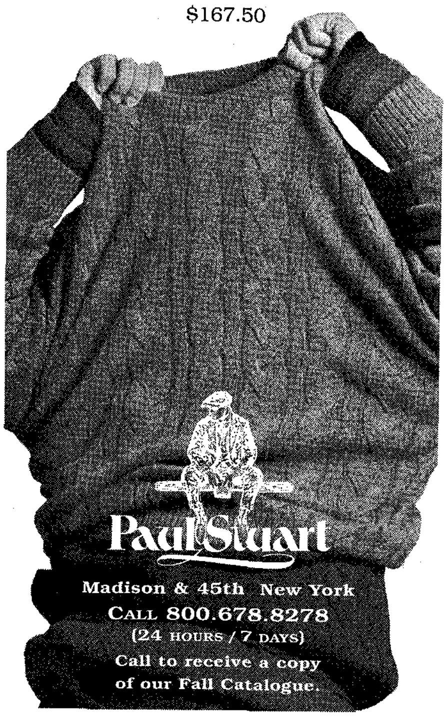

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his bed and can feel his legs, warm under the covers, pushing against her back.

"It's too dark," he says. "I want to sleep with the light on."

"Why?" Annie says. "Darkness is good. It's nothing to be afraid of."

"I'm not afraid," he says rolling onto his back. His voice has an anxious hitch to it, though.

"That's good."

"What is 'afraid'?" Anthony asks.

All around her the room is full of indistinguishable objects and flickering shadows from the roof garden—living things blowing, husk-like, in the March wind. A siren howls from below, muffled by the distance it has to travel.

"Annie?" Anthony is looking at her, his eyes demanding.

"It's a feeling," she says. "It's a way you feel." The words come out sounding thick and automatic. She concentrates on the pressure of his knee, bony and hard against the small of her back. "I think you know," she adds softly, when her voice seems more like her own again.

When she leans over to kiss him, he clasps her cheeks in his small damp hands. "Sleep tight," she whispers. Anthony doesn't let go. "Sleep tight," she repeats, gently peeling off his fingers.

In the front hall, Cleo has on the long tailored coat, gray slacks, and platform sneakers she refers to as her plane PJs. "Asleep?" she asks cheerfully. She already has more important things to think about.

"Almost," Annie says.

"I'm catching the red-eye. Be back Saturday at noon." She puts on a gray felt hat.

"You leaving, babe?" Jay comes in from the living room holding the *Wall Street Journal* in one hand.

"Mm-hmm," Cleo smiles, adjusting the hat just in time for Jay to knock it askew by enveloping her in his arms for a newspaper-crumpling bear hug and a kiss.

Cleo laughs and kisses him back. A firm but restrictive press of the lips.

"Call when you get there?" Jay says over his shoulder, already walking away across the hall.

"I will." Cleo makes a what-can-you-do face at Annie as she tucks her hair behind her ears and pulls the hat back into place. "Oh, will you make sure

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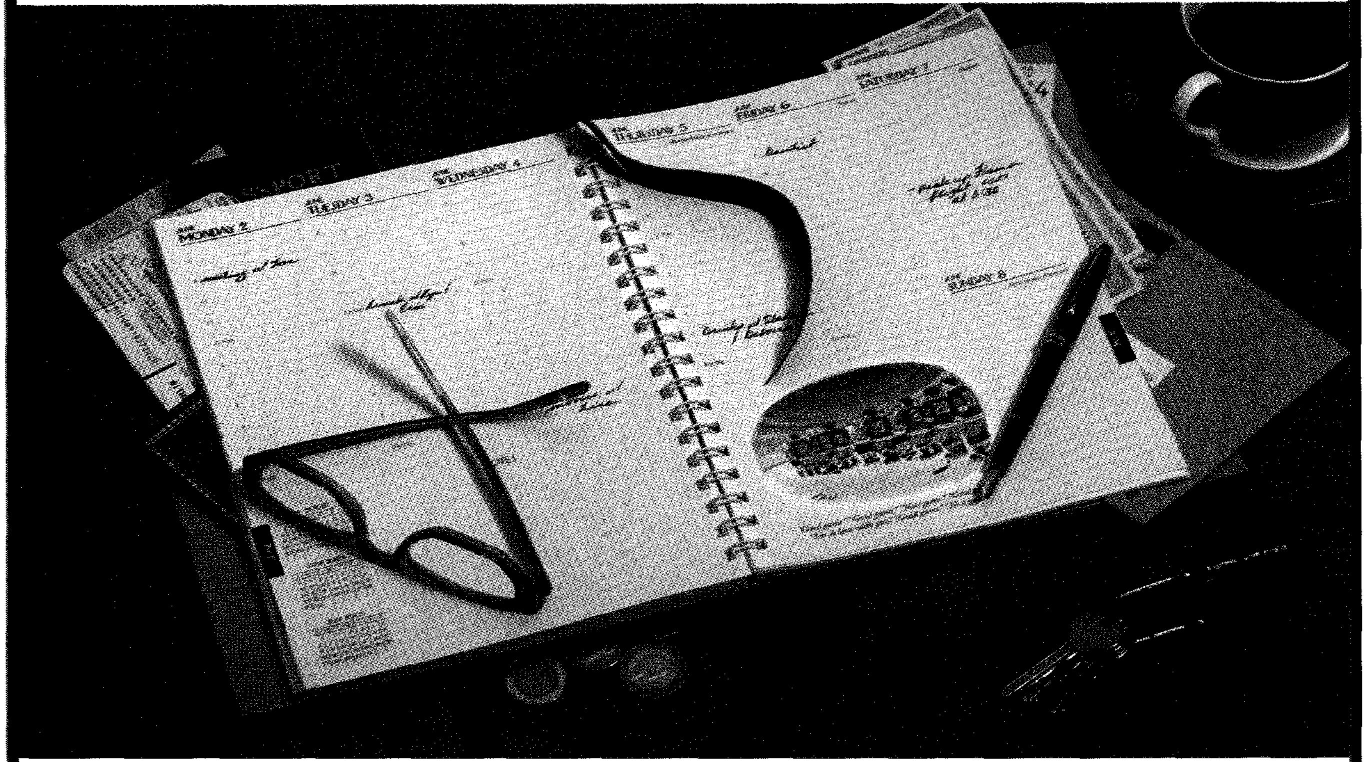

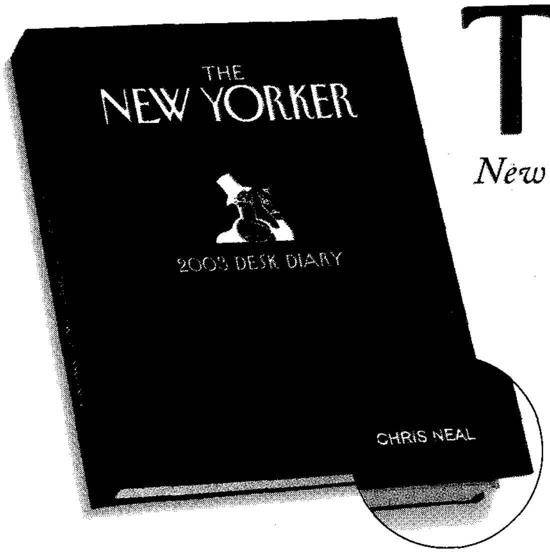

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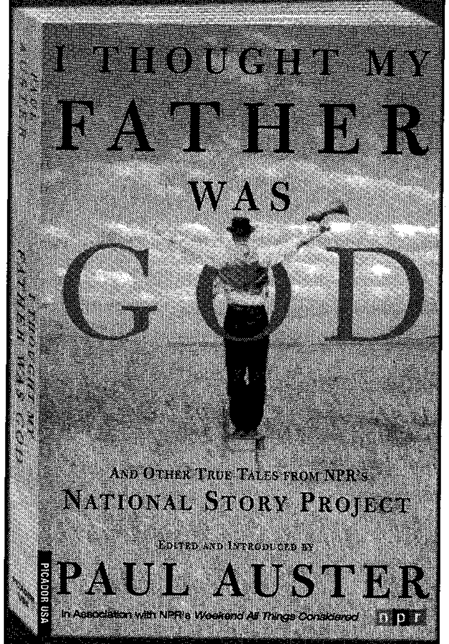
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Mrs. Tibbs gets the envelope I put on the counter?"

Annie nods.

"You O.K.?" Cleo fixes Annie with her gaze, but there is something prohibitive about it, just as there was in her kiss.

"Yes," Annie says. "Have a safe trip."

"Be strong, kiddo." Cleo gives Annie a cool, dry kiss on the cheek.

Annie forces a smile and then closes the door after her.

In the kitchen she has the desire—the first in a long time—for a drink. She has not touched alcohol since she was diagnosed. In high school, there were two or three times she got really drunk—an exhilarating, freeing drunk where she became loud, sexy, and silly, the kind of girl who took drama instead of typing. This was a long time ago, when she was a Californian. When she was still living in Long Beach, answering phones at the tattoo parlor her brother worked at, and imagining she would go to design school, marry someone famous, live in a mansion. It was before junior college, before Todd really lost it, certainly before New York.

Annie opens Cleo and Jay's liquor cabinet, pulls out the Johnnie Walker, pours herself a glass. It tastes sharp and pure as medicine. Then she turns on the tap to finish the dishes. With her hands immersed in the warm water, the whiskey hot inside her, she tries to listen to her body—tries to feel the movement of her blood, the labored breathing of her cells. But she feels nothing—not even the beating of her heart.

"Hey, why don't you turn a light on?" Jay is standing in the doorway, where Anthony stood before.

"Oh," Annie says. "I forgot." But this isn't true. She has chosen the darkness. Seeing clearly seems like a distraction; she is surrounded by other people's clutter.

Jay flips the switch from the doorway but he hesitates before entering. Annie has the feeling he is afraid she is crying.

"Vitamins," he says. "Forgot my vitamins."

Annie wipes her face with her sleeve. She takes another sip of whiskey.

"Should you be drinking that—with—you know, your treatment and all?" Jay says the word "treatment" as if it were a euphemism for something sordid. He pours four pills as fat as roaches into his palm. In the refrigerator, bottles of zinc, vitamins C, A, and B, iron, protein powder, and Strong Body Multitabs occupy an entire shelf of the door.

She and Jay have never addressed her illness, a reticence that is not exactly strange but tiring. Cleo, with her strong sense of calm, her reliance on order and the ability to manipulate, has always been the arbiter of conversations about Annie's health. Jay usually pretends not to be listening, as if it were some other intimate, distinctly feminine problem they were discussing. "He doesn't get it," Cleo told Annie once. The comment was slightly unnerving—what was it, exactly, according to Cleo, that Jay didn't get?

Now, instead of looking at her, he occupies himself with a carton of skim milk.

"Here," Annie says, handing him a glass. When he pours the milk, the muscles under his taut, sallow skin rise and subside. Annie feels a corresponding rise of something unidentifiable in her gut.

"Your heart rate must be low," she says unsteadily.

"Forty-nine at rest." Jay brightens. "Last year it was seventy-two. Count it," he says, extending his arm.

Annie wraps her fingers around his warm wrist. His pulse crawls as sluggishly as ink through water. Annie counts forty-nine but doesn't let go. "Fifty, fifty-one, fifty-two, fifty-three," she recites out loud and tightens her grip. She concentrates on the flawless rhythm of his blood working its way through his body, nourishing his bones and muscles—she would like to absorb it, gobble it up, make it her own. Jay looks at her quizzically but doesn't pull away. She raises his wrist to his chest, bending his arm at the elbow, and watches his biceps swell. Suddenly, she can imagine it, pressed against her collarbone—his arm wrapped heavily around her neck and her teeth grazing the pale, damp, almost womanly skin at the crook of his elbow. Her own

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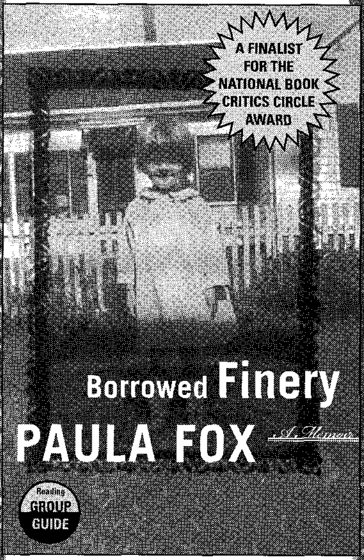

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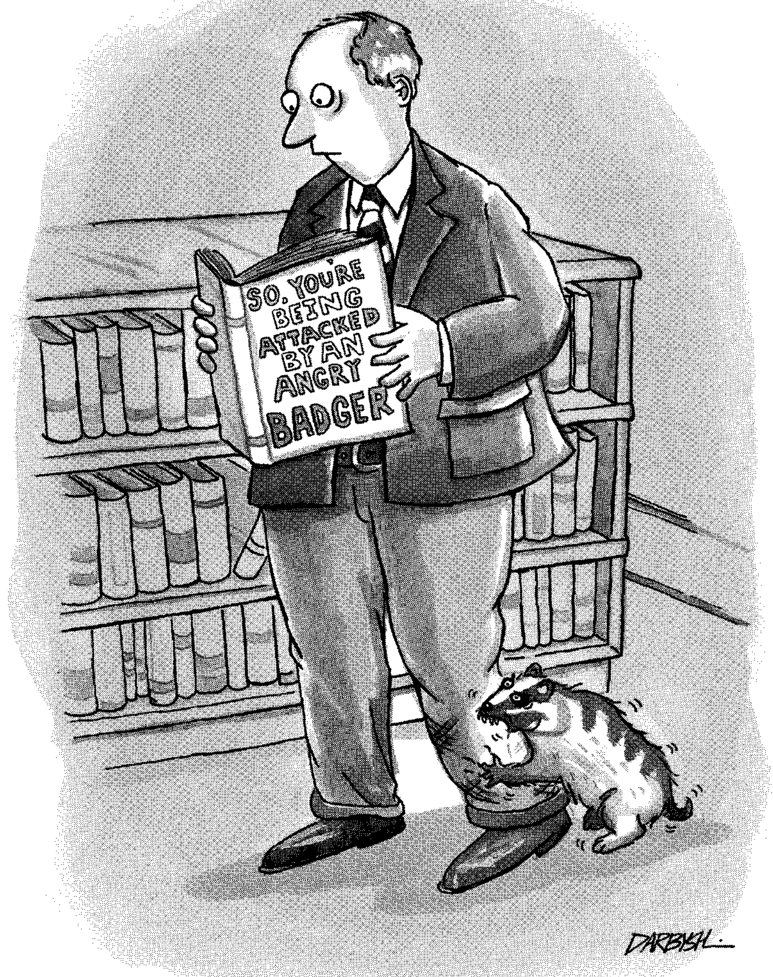
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low breathing, she realizes when the hum of the refrigerator switches off, is the loudest sound in the room.

"Annie," Jay says, peeling her fingers from his wrist. "I think you need to get some sleep."

Annie removes her hand. "Maybe." She is surprisingly unembarrassed, even when she sways slightly against the door frame. She can feel Jay's eyes following her across the floor.

In the morning, Annie fixes herself breakfast. Early buds have appeared overnight on the trees in the Park, and the ground looks black and wet with spring. Friday mornings are when she usually goes in to see Dr. Tatel, but this week she is going in on Monday because Dr. Tatel is going out of town. This small irregularity feels exciting—evidence that she is well enough to be rescheduled.

In the last few months, she has learned how to turn her body over to medical science as if it were a sick pet. She can be poked and prodded now without feeling judged by the hands examining for error, can watch her blood coil up out of her arm without getting nauseated, can take the cold metallic sting of the stethoscope without feeling light-headed at the idea of her own beating heart. She has had practice, after all. She went to the emergency room at least four times with her brother before he took off. "Annie," he would joke afterward, "you watch those doctors like you're in training."

From the kitchen, Annie can hear Jay grunting on his chin-up bar. In about an hour, he will come out of the study and walk around the apartment, stretching his elbows behind his head, picking up newspapers and magazines, tossing them back down. At about eleven, he will try to sit at the computer and "organize his notes" before he goes to the gym

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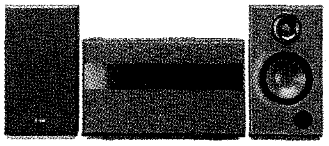

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at two o'clock, but will end up online playing a pro-sports betting game based on the stock market instead.

Annie puts on her sneakers and jacket to go for a walk. She has not left the apartment for four days. On Fifth Avenue, she is quickly swept up in the rush of taxis, buses, tourists, shoppers, and can collectors rattling their metal carts over the uneven sidewalk. At the corner of Park and Sixty-fifth Street, there is a Japanese man with thick glasses trying to feed a chocolate popsicle to a pigeon with a stump instead of a foot. Almost half the pigeons collecting tentatively around him have mutant feet—grotesque, fleshy bulbs or string-tangled toes. Annie can barely look at them, but at the same time cannot look away. She watches them hop around the cracked concrete eating invisible morsels, pecking at each other, and clumsily, violently, trying to mate. Why have they chosen this meagre, earthbound existence when they could be airborne, soaring up above the garbage and pollution—beyond the need to fight over an old man's crumbs?

It is almost noon by the time Annie realizes she is too cold to stay out any longer. The sun is flat and white and the budding trees cast a blurry shade on the path. Annie heads uptown, suddenly worried that she has exhausted herself, although she feels quite all right. Nannies and baby carriages and strollers have taken over the sidewalk. Nursery schools and half-day programs are getting out—it is the hour of the under-five-year-old. In the apartment, Jay will be fixing lunch—a protein shake, a bowl of cottage cheese, a chicken breast, and iceberg lettuce. The image of his biceps gathering into a round knot and then releasing under her hand appears in her mind. The thick skin, the light hairs, the full, invincible blue-green veins. Mrs. Tibbs will not bring Anthony home for another half hour.

Annie greets Philipe, the doorman. She suspects he sees her as some sort of charity case of Jay and Cleo's, or, worse yet, as a freeloader. But today her self-consciousness has vanished. Crossing the black and white marble tiles she feels transparent, like one of those tiny clear fish whose slippery bodies filter and refract light, break it into dancing pieces. A clammy layer of perspiration has built up on her lower lip and under her shirt, where the raggedy, nylon-covered underwire of her bra sits against her rib cage. An-

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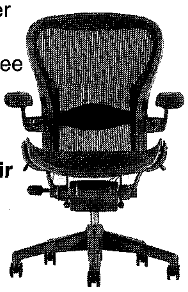

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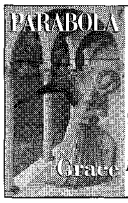

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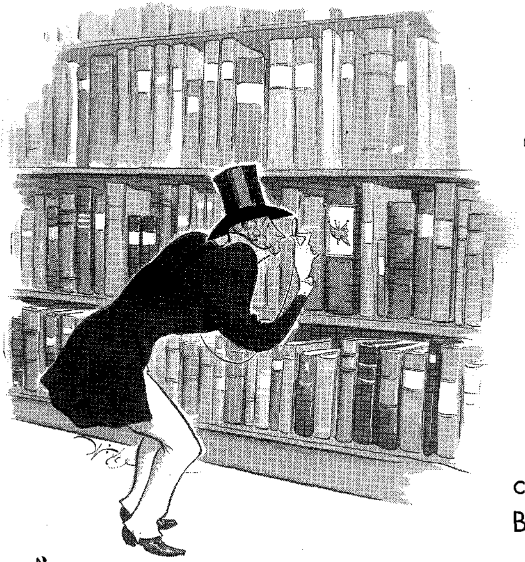

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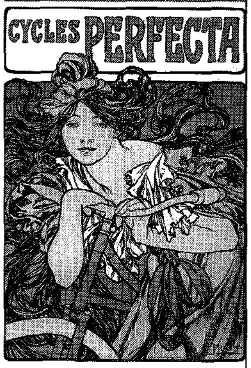

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ticipation—Annie recognizes the same fluttering feeling that rose in her last night.

The elevator opens directly into the apartment, which takes up half the building's twentieth floor. It is bright inside, full of sunlight, dust particles hovering, visible in the air. She has started to shrug her coat off before she realizes there is a hysterical voice coming from the living room. Annie freezes with the coat around her elbows.

"Michele, you can't—" Jay's voice interrupts the higher sound of the girl's voice.

"I can't? Oh, really, I can't? You don't know anything about what I can do, Jay. You don't know shit about me." There is the sucking sound of the sliding door to the roof deck being opened.

The hazy bubble of expectation that has carried Annie upstairs bursts in an instant. Of course Jay has been sleeping with Michele. Hasn't she known this all along? It is her first thought, followed immediately by the urge to back up and away—to get into the elevator, go down to the lobby, out onto the cold street.

"Jesus Christ," Jay says. "What are you? Don't—"

But Annie is no longer listening to the words, just to the tense, terrified sound of his voice, which propels her forward, silently, across the sun-bright floorboards. When she gets to the entrance of the living room, she can see Jay standing in the open expanse of the sliding door and beyond him Michele, looking as though she's about to climb up onto the chest-high brick wall that marks the edge of the terrace. Her hair is pulled back in a severe ponytail that the wind is blowing up in all directions. She looks frightened, a little haggard. And she is high. Annie recognizes the signs from when she lived with Todd.

Both Jay and Michele turn at the same time to look at Annie, although she is not aware of having said anything. "Annie—" Jay says. It is possible that he is crying; his face has an ashen, uncomposed look to it. Annie averts her eyes. He is cowering in the doorway of his own living room, sucked dry by his own fear. The wall Michele is standing at is not even at the edge of the roof—beyond it there are several yards of tar and loose gravel.

Michele says nothing to Annie, but turns to Jay, wide-eyed with a new burst of rage. "You're probably sleeping with her, too. Aren't you? You're probably fucking her right under Cleo's nose. That's

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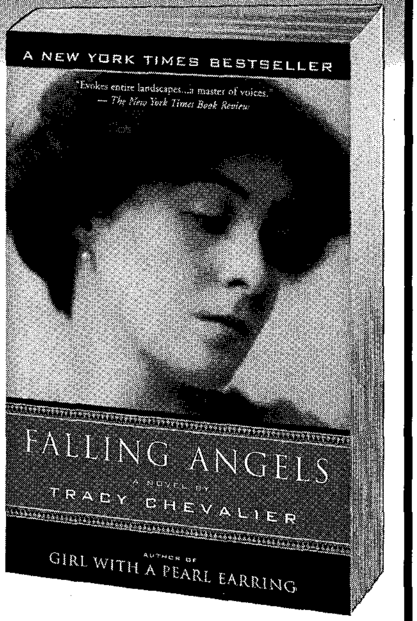
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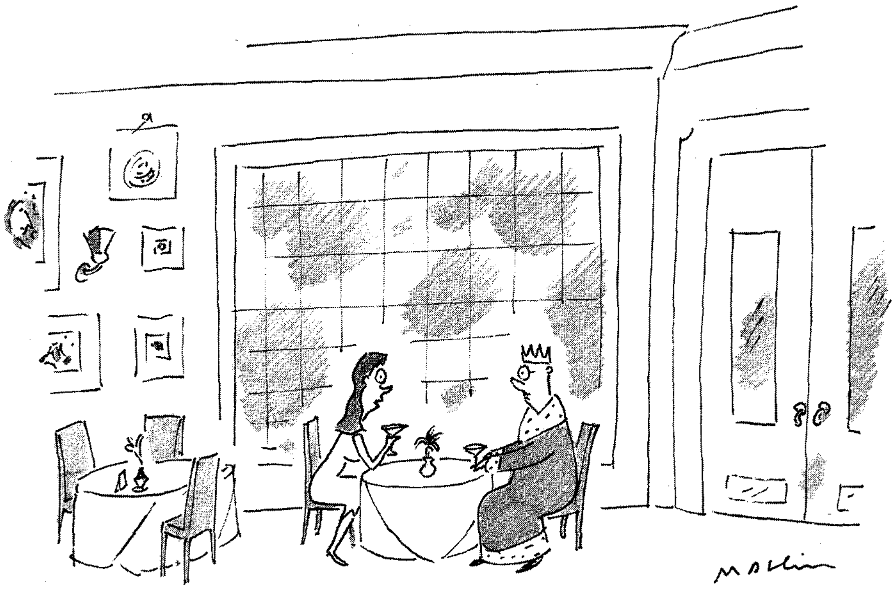


"And before you were deposed—what did you do?"

• •

convenient. You don't even have to worry about the future, you sick asshole."

"No, no, no," Jay protests, and Annie stands absolutely still, bracing herself against the blow implicit in Michele's words. But they seem to float above her.

The girl looks almost shocked herself, still breathing too fast, but quiet now.

"I'm not dying," Annie says calmly. "I'm waiting."

She is aware of a new edge in her voice. A light, powerful feeling begins to course through her. She can feel her own blood finally—she is aware of its quick rhythm in the channels of her veins. She is aware of its feeding her bones and tissues, rushing from one region of her body to another, fuelled by something bright and strong and weightless, impervious to treatment or disease. It is as if some door had opened inside her and she could hear everything—not just her own heartbeat but the hollow, coddled ticking of Jay's body, the more chaotic, unformed racing of Michele's, and the troubled cacophony all three of them are making. The sound is real and essential and utterly irrelevant. It makes her think of the time her brother gave her a tattoo—a spindly leaf and its shadow curving along the jutting bone of her ankle. It had hurt like nothing she'd known before, and she'd squirmed and bit her lip until it was bloody, feeling nothing but the prick of the needle against delicate nerve endings, the burn of the ink under her skin. That's not you, Todd had said, pointing at her ankle. That's your body—leave it for a minute and come back.

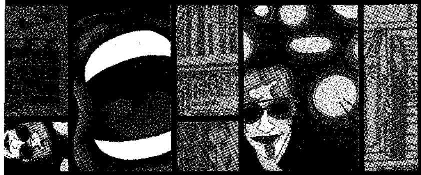
"In fifteen minutes, Anthony will be coming home," Annie says to Michele. "And then Eden. You'd better go home before that."

From his place at the glass door, Jay is watching her.

"What makes you such an expert at what I should do?" Michele says. "You just live here. This isn't even really your home." But her voice is losing its conviction.

"No, it's not," Annie replies. "But I know you should leave now. You should go home and get some rest."

Michele heaves a deep sigh and runs her hand over her hair in a habitual gesture. "If I leave, it's for her sake, not yours, Jay," she says, in a voice that trembles, straining to be haughty. "And for poor Anthony. I'm sorry he has a twisted fuck of a father like you." Then she takes a few steps across the terrace and past Jay into the living room—stiff, careful steps shaped by some combination of pride and restraint. She plucks her leather jacket up off the sofa and walks across the beige-and-white Chinese carpet, leaving faint gray footprints on the plush surface which Carolita, the cleaning lady, will have to spend hours on her hands and knees scrubbing to remove. The thought



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flits through Annie's mind involuntarily.

When Michele gets to Annie, she pauses, close enough for Annie to smell the acrid, strung-out scent of her sweat. "Don't let him touch you," she says fiercely. There are little bubbles of saliva in the corners of her mouth. In a moment, she is gone, and the heavy oak door to the elevator vestibule clicks shut.

When Annie turns back toward Jay, he has sunk down onto the sofa with his knees wedged in against the coffee table and his head in his hands. He looks too big and ungainly for the spot he has climbed into. The curve of his back has the slump of defeat. What could she ever have thought his body had to offer?

"It's not what you think," Jay begins. "Michele is on something. She's upset—" He breaks off under Annie's gaze.

"It's not my business," she says. "It isn't my home."

"Of course it is. You live here. You take care of Anthony."

Jay shifts his gaze out toward the terrace in a self-conscious, nearsighted way. Looking at him, Annie is filled with the knowledge of things outside this room, of hospital waiting rooms and of the bowels of complicated machines that can see through flesh to what lies beneath it, of wet sidewalks and empty hallways, of the smell of new leaves and spring earth and grease coming out of coffee-shop air vents, of babies in the Park and the serious yellow of taxis and how simple it all looks from above. She is filled with the knowledge of loneliness and suspense and courage. Unlike this man protected by the mantle of good health and good fortune, she knows what is required not to be afraid.

Jay ventures a nervous glance up at her. His face is still pale and covered with a thin sheen of sweat. "I'm sorry—" he begins. "I'm sorry about what Michele—"

"It's all right," Annie interrupts. "It doesn't matter." And she means it.

From the hall, there is the whirr of the elevator door opening and the sound of Anthony's high, excited voice, then Mrs. Tibbs's lower, wearier murmur of response. In a moment, Anthony is rushing toward Annie, flushed with fresh air and emotion. He is waving a sheet of paint-stiffened paper so that colored chips fall from it to the floor. "For you—" He is panting. "I made this. I didn't know if you'd be here." ♦

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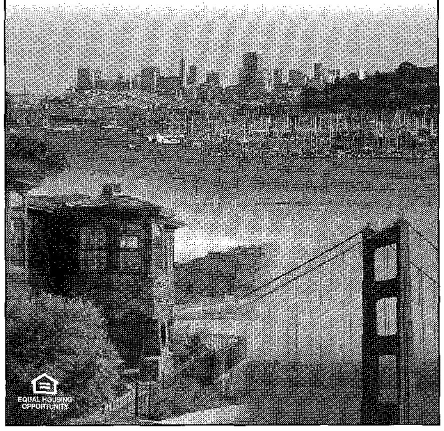

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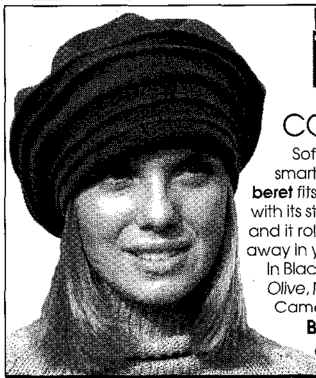

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THE CRITICS

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THE WOMEN COME AND GO

The love song of T. S. Eliot.

BY LOUIS MENANDE

T. S. Eliot's sex life. Do we really want to go there? It is a sad and desolate place. Eliot was twenty-six and, almost certainly, a frustrated virgin when, in 1915, he married Vivienne Haigh-Wood, an Englishwoman he had known for three months. Haigh-Wood was a medically and emotionally vexed person. Her troubles included irregular and frequent menstruation, migraines, neuralgia, panic attacks, and, eventually, addiction to her medication, particularly to ether. She was pretty, ambitious, and (on her better days) vivacious. Eliot was handsome, ambitious, and the opposite of vivacious. "Exquisite and listless," Bertrand Russell described him when he met the Eliots for dinner two weeks after the marriage. "She says she married him in order to stimulate him, but finds she can't do it. Obviously he married in order to be stimulated. I think she will soon be tired of him."

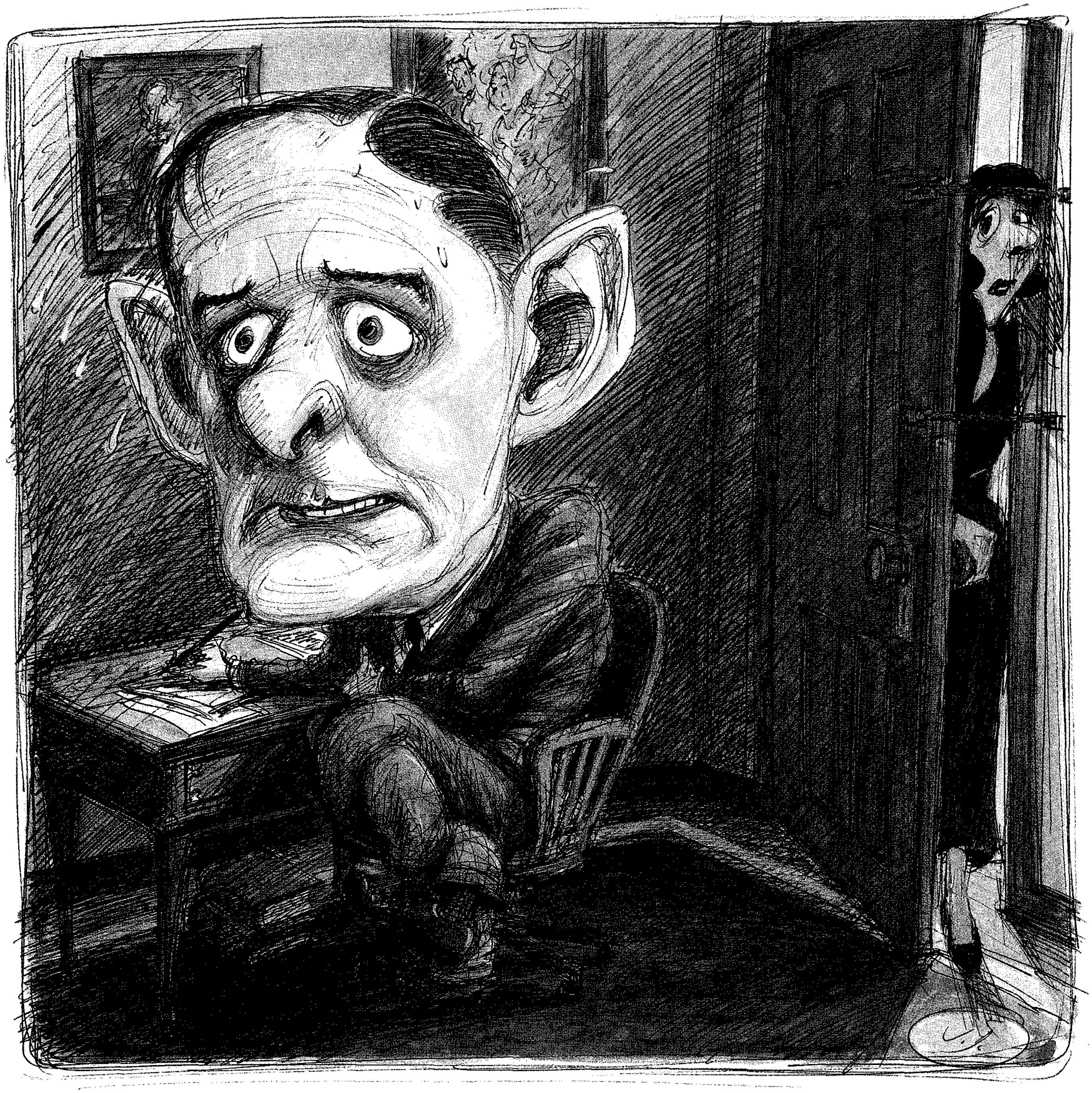
Russell was correct to intuit a tension. The Eliots seem to have discovered that they were sexually incompatible almost immediately. Mrs. Eliot reacted by having an affair with Russell, which her husband either tacitly condoned or was remarkably obtuse about. (Russell was a sexual predator who permitted himself to become temporarily infatuated with the women he seduced. He pretended, by way of self-justification, to believe that his intimacy with Vivienne provided a form of marital therapy to the Eliots.)

Eliot's own medical and emotional condition was not exactly robust, and he was quickly worn down by the demands of caring for Vivienne. He was also a man whose sense of propriety was sometimes indistinguishable from squeamishness. He told his friends the Woolfs that he could not imagine shaving in his wife's presence. He and Vivienne slept in separate rooms. She baited him in front of guests; he often responded by declining to respond; and (although it is impossible to be sure) they seem to have been, for much of their marriage, sexually estranged. It was in Eliot's character to convert misfortune into fate, and he eventually undertook to normalize the abnormality. In 1927, he was confirmed into the Church of England, which made divorce essentially impossible; in 1928, he took a vow of chastity.

Four years later, Eliot went to the United States to teach and lecture, leaving Vivienne in England. While he was away, he had his solicitors send her a letter announcing his intention to separate, and when he returned, after a year, he went into hiding. If he imagined that a clean break would help Vivienne get over him faster, he miscalculated badly. The separation unhinged her. She stalked her husband, now a famous man, for five years. She was never able to find out where he lived, and he used to slip out the back of the office at Faber & Faber, where he was an editor, whenever she showed up asking for him. (The receptionist was on instructions to give him a special ring.) Most of the friends Vivienne had made through her marriage abandoned her, and her behavior grew increasingly bizarre. In 1934, she joined the British Union of Fascists; she liked to wear the uniform in public. In 1938, her brother, Maurice, had her committed to an asylum. She died there in 1947, at the age of fifty-eight, possibly from a deliberate overdose.

Eliot had meanwhile renewed his acquaintance with an American woman named Emily Hale, whom he had been in love with when he was a student at Harvard. At the time, she had declined to reciprocate his affections; now, an unmarried drama teacher at Scripps College, she found that her reasons for indifference had become less pressing. She devoted herself to Eliot. During the nineteen-thirties, she frequently spent the summer in England with him. Their relations were platonic. Hale was a proper Boston lady; Eliot's Bloomsbury friends found her hideously dull. "That *awful* American woman Miss Hale," Ottoline Morrell complained. "She is like a sergeant major, quite intolerable. However Tom takes her about everywhere." Hale plainly believed that she was first in line to become the next Mrs. Eliot. But when Vivienne died Eliot told Hale that although he loved her, it was not, as she reported to a friend, "in the way usual to men less gifted i.e. with complete love thro' a married relationship." Hale was fifty-five. She decided to settle for incomplete love through an unmarried relationship.

Eliot had acquired another admirer, an Englishwoman named Mary Trevelyan. Their relationship, too, was asexual; apparently to discourage illusions of intimacy, Eliot made it a rule that they could not dine together on consecutive nights. They were friends for twenty years, during which Trevelyan proposed three times. Eliot demurred: after Vivienne, he explained, the idea of living with someone was a "nightmare." Then, in 1957, at the age of sixty-eight, and without notifying Hale or Trevelyan, Eliot married his thirty-year-old secretary, Valerie Fletcher. Eliot and Mary Trevelyan stopped speaking to one another; Emily Hale had a nervous breakdown and ended up in Massachusetts General Hospital. Eliot was happy in his second marriage, which seems to have been a case of complete love of the married type. ("There was nothing wrong with Tom, if that's your implication," Valerie Eliot once told an interviewer who asked why Eliot's first mar-



Why, since their incompatibility quickly became obvious, did Eliot stay with his first wife, Vivienne, for eighteen years?

VICTOR JUHASZ

riage had been a failure.) Eliot died in 1965; Valerie Eliot is still alive. She is her husband's literary executor and, thanks to "Cats," a very wealthy woman.

This may seem a limited range of sexual experience for a poet much of whose work is preoccupied with sex and sexuality. But E. M. Forster had published three novels before he had any clear idea of what the sex act consisted in, and Henry James, as far as we know, never had a sexual relationship (of the "complete" type, anyway) with anyone. Sexual experience has no necessary correlation with sexual imagination, and neglect of this basic distinction is the second most exasperating thing about Carole Seymour-Jones's "Painted Shadow: The Life of Vivienne Eliot, First Wife of T. S. Eliot, and the Long-Suppressed Truth About Her Influence on His Genius" (Doubleday; $35). Seymour-Jones insists on reading Eliot's poetry as a literal report on his personal tastes and experiences. Eliot invented characters who were sexually passive (J. Alfred Prufrock), sexually predatory (Mr. Apollinax, a character modelled on Russell), sexually mercenary (the young man carbuncular, in "The Waste Land"), sexually louche (Mr. Silvero, of the caressing hands, in "Gerontion"), sexually violent (Sweeney), and sexually indiscriminate (Columbo, in the series of privately circulated ribald verses, of a socially unredeeming explicitness that would almost make a rapper blush, entitled "King Bolo and His Big Black Kween"). The sex in Eliot's poetry is almost always bad sex, either libidinally limp or morally vicious. But that's because for Eliot bad sex was the symptom of a failure of civilization, and it is a fallacy to conclude that, because sex in his poems is disgusting, Eliot

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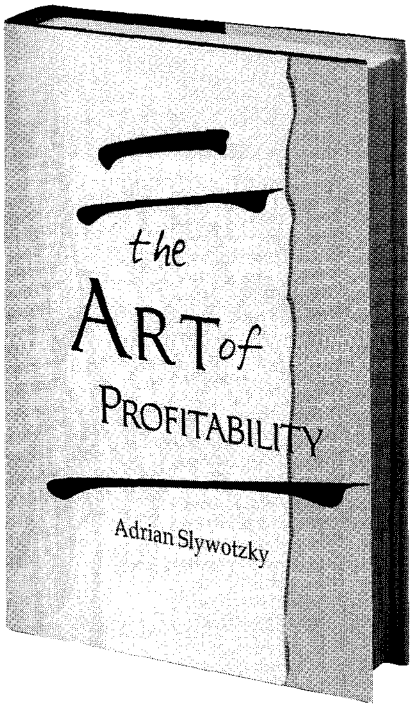

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was disgusted by sex. Eliot was disgusted by modern life, period. That he found a way to express that disgust through lurid sexual characterization was one of the reasons his poetry seemed, in its time, so compelling.

"Painted Shadow" draws on Vivienne Eliot's papers, which she left to the Bodleian Library, at Oxford. Copyright on that material is claimed by Valerie Eliot, but Seymour-Jones was given permission to quote from it without restriction, and her book is filled with fresh details. Although her sympathies lie entirely with Vivienne, she clears Eliot of most of the nastier insinuations of Michael Hastings's play "Tom and Viv," which was first performed in 1984, and made into a movie, with Willem Dafoe and Miranda Richardson, ten years later. Hastings got his information about the marriage largely from an interview with Maurice Haigh-Wood, in 1980, when Haigh-Wood, with his sister and his distinguished brother-in-law no longer around, felt that it was safe to cast events in a light favorable to himself. Haigh-Wood was not deliberately deceitful; he just felt guilty about what had happened to his sister, and he implied that he and Eliot had plotted to get her out of the way by having her involuntarily committed. Seymour-Jones makes it clear that Eliot had nothing to do with Vivienne's committal—Maurice arranged it—and that, whether or not Vivienne was clinically insane, she had become, by 1938, a danger to herself. The police found her wandering the streets of London at five in the morning; when Maurice arrived to get her, she asked him if it was true that Eliot had been beheaded.

Still, "Painted Shadow" does not really challenge the standard view of Vivienne Eliot as an unhappy woman who made Eliot unhappy but gave him (as Yeats said of the spirits) metaphors for poetry. Contrary to the book's subtitle, the truth of Vivienne Eliot's influence on her husband's genius has not been long suppressed, because, apart from the emotional agitation, which is acknowledged by nearly every commentator and by Eliot himself, her influence was not especially notable. Vivienne read Eliot's drafts; she contributed, under pseudonyms, satirical poems, stories, and reviews to the journal he edited, *The Criterion*, whose name she had supplied; and she believed in his genius. Eliot admired her writing and valued her advice. He sometimes adapted lines she had written for his own poems. (He also adapted lines from Dante, Shakespeare, and dozens of other writers.) He was proud of her literary abilities, and although he complained interminably about their health and their finances, he does not seem to have criticized her to their friends or to his family.

But why did he marry her? Why, after their incompatibility had become obvious, did he stay with her for eighteen years? And why, after her death, did he wait ten years before marrying again? Seymour-Jones has a theory. She believes that Eliot was gay, and that he led a "secret life." He married Vivienne (according to this theory) in a desperate attempt to "normalize" himself, and he stayed married partly out of fear that, knowing the truth about his sexuality, she would expose him and cause a scandal. He separated from her in order to pursue relationships with men; he used Emily Hale and Mary Trevelyan as beards; and in old age, suffering from emphysema, he married, in effect, a nurse. And this brings us to the first most exasperating thing about Seymour-Jones's book, which is not her theory but her complete inability to prove it.

It is certainly possible that Eliot had homosexual feelings. He might have had exclusively homosexual feelings (which is what Seymour-Jones apparently believes); he might have had bisexual feelings; he might have had homosexual feelings that he repressed, or that he felt ashamed of or guilty about. He might have had homoerotic encounters, and he might even have had homosexual experiences (which Seymour-Jones has convinced herself he did). The trouble is that the evidence available to establish any of these things is hopelessly inconclusive.

The claim that homosexuality is the "key" to understanding Eliot is not new, but before "Painted Shadow" (and apart from some speculative remarks, of the raised-eyebrow variety, in a few memoirs) the argument was made almost entirely from the poetry. In 1952, a young Canadian professor, John Peter, published an article in the academic journal *Essays in Criticism* in which he interpreted "The Waste Land" as an elegy for a dead male beloved. (Among other evidence, Peter claimed to have found allusions to sodomy in the poem.) In 1952, imaginative interpretations of “The Waste Land” were already a dime a dozen. But, when Peter’s essay came to Eliot’s attention, Eliot had his solicitors send the journal a letter in which they reported their client’s “amazement and disgust,” and strongly implied that he would sue for libel if the article continued to be disseminated. Peter, much abashed, sent Eliot an apology, and the article was purged from a later printing of that number of *Essays in Criticism*. In 1969, though, four years after Eliot’s death, Peter reprinted it, in the same journal, and added a postscript in which he identified the beloved as a young man Eliot had known in Paris, Jean Verdenal. And in 1977 James E. Miller, Jr., encouraged by Peter’s article, published a book-length interpretation, “T. S. Eliot’s Personal Waste Land,” devoted to what would now be called “queering” the poem. It was an energetic and somewhat carefree performance. Miller explained the speech of the hyacinth girl, for example—“ ‘You gave me hyacinths first a year ago; / They called me the hyacinth girl’ ”—by suggesting that the lines are spoken by a man, and should be read with a kind of cross-dressed suggestiveness: “ ‘They called me the hyacinth *girl!*’ ”

It might seem that Eliot’s reaction to Peter’s original article betrays him, but Eliot had threatened before to sue a publication that had printed information about his private life. He was a buttoned-up man (to put it mildly), and he didn’t enjoy seeing personal things written about him any more than anyone else does. His suppression of Peter’s article doesn’t mean that Peter was wrong, but it doesn’t mean that Peter was right, either. One imagines that, in the case at hand, the annoyance of a secretly gay man and the annoyance of a homophobe would be about the same.

Like Peter and Miller, Seymour-Jones attaches a lot of significance to Jean Verdenal. This is understandable, since there is no other plausible known candidate for a male love-object in Eliot’s biography. Verdenal was a French medical student whom Eliot met in Paris, where he was spending a year on his own, in 1910. They boarded at the same pension, and became companions. That year in Paris was inspirational for Eliot: he got interested in the philosophy of Henri Bergson, which was an influence on many of his early poems, including “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” finished in 1911; and he was introduced to the reactionary cultural and political ideas of the Action Française, which influenced both his poetry and his social criticism. He romanticized the year, and Verdenal was part of the memory.

One reason Verdenal acquired this importance, though, was that after that year he and Eliot never saw each other again. They exchanged some letters, and then Verdenal enlisted in the Army as a medical officer. He was killed, in 1915, at Gallipoli. When Eliot published his first book of poems, “Prufrock and Other Observations,” in 1917, he dedicated it to Verdenal, “*mort aux Dardanelles*.” Eliot seems to have believed that Verdenal drowned (he did not), and this has given support to the identification of the drowned sailor Phlebas the Phoenician, in “The Waste Land” (“Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you”), with Verdenal.

It is fair to assume that Eliot felt a close attachment to Verdenal, and that he mourned his death. Eliot’s letters to Verdenal are lost, but we have Verdenal’s to Eliot (or some of them; it is possible, of course, that Eliot destroyed others), and there is nothing in them to suggest an unusual intimacy. They show Verdenal to be, like Eliot at that age, a high-minded, philosophical young man with an enthusiasm for French poetry and for Wagner. It is possible that, in Eliot’s mind, he represented a love that dared not declare itself; but it is certain that he represented the flower of the European civilization that the First World War destroyed. And that is why it is legitimate to imagine him as the real-life figure behind Phlebas in “The Waste Land.” Whatever personal demons drove Eliot to compose it, “The Waste Land” is a poem about the war, just as “Women in

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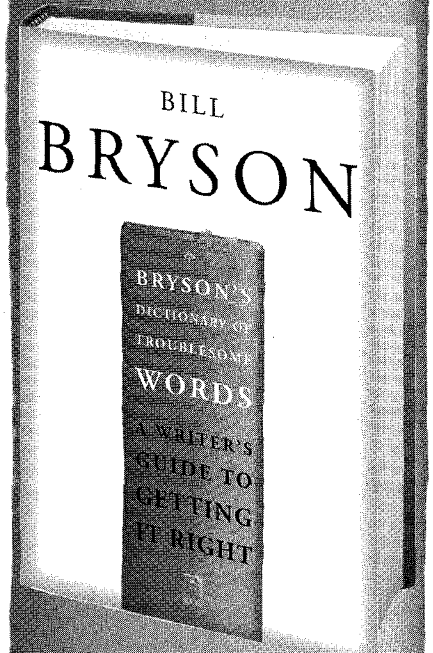

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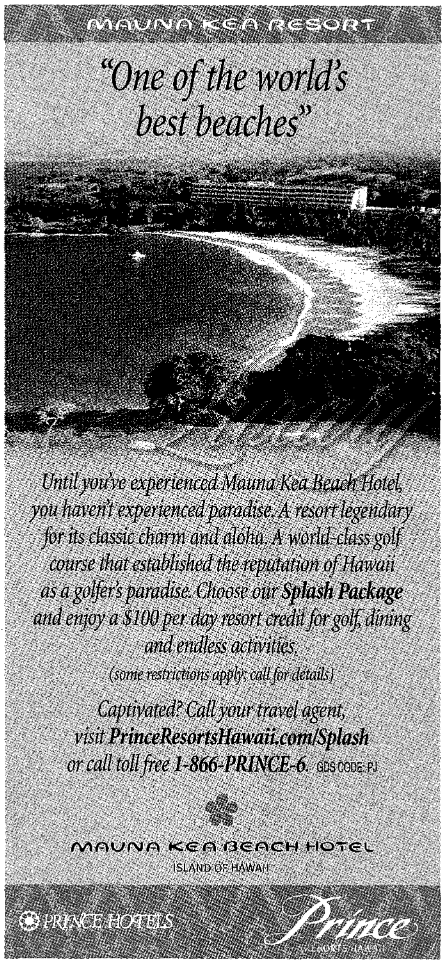

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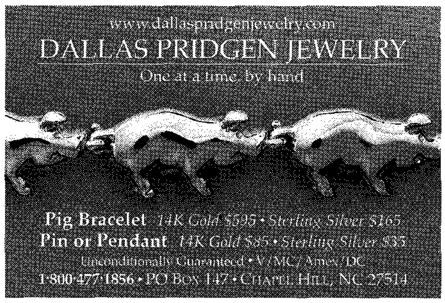
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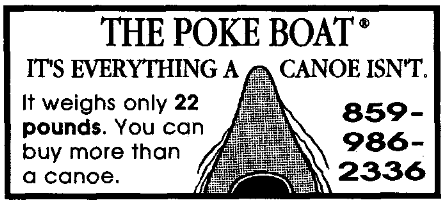
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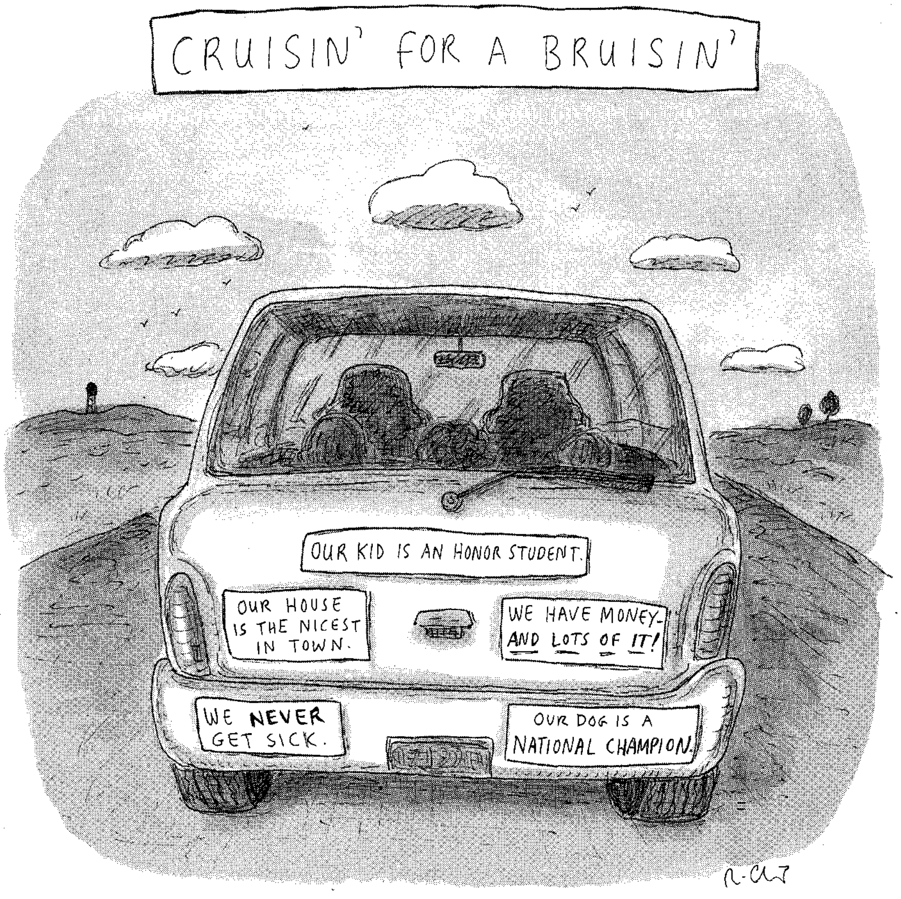
Love" and "To the Lighthouse" and "In Our Time" are books about the war and the way of life the war put an end to.

Seymour-Jones places Eliot in the company of a number of homosexual men at various points in his life, but Eliot associated as a matter of course with writers and artists who were homosexual or bisexual: Lytton Strachey, Maynard Keynes, Serge Diaghilev, Osbert Sitwell, Virginia Woolf, Djuna Barnes, Gertrude Stein, Geoffrey Faber, W. H. Auden. Homosexuality was just part of the world he worked in, which makes it even harder to understand why, if he did have affairs with men, he went to such pains to remain closeted. In 1933, searching for a place to hide from Vivienne, Eliot spent a short time living in a flat with three gay men. Seymour-Jones suggests that he went cruising at night, but the evidence for this is a remark, many years later, by one of the flatmates: "Well, he would hardly have spent that period living with us if he had not had *some* leanings, now would he?" This seems rather thin corroboration.

Sometime in 1934, Eliot left the flat and went to live in Kensington in a rectory run by a Father Eric Cheetham. Seymour-Jones says, "Tom and Eric Cheetham lived together for six years." This is a little misleading. Eliot paid rent on his rooms at the rectory, and, while Cheetham ate with the other priests who lived there, Eliot usually went out for dinner. Beginning in 1937, Eliot and Cheetham did share a flat near the rectory, but in 1940 Eliot left and moved in with a family outside London. After the war, he lived, until his marriage to Valerie, with John Hayward, a single man who was confined to a wheelchair by muscular dystrophy, and who was pleased to describe himself as "the most un-homosexual man in London." Much of Eliot's correspondence remains unpublished; some of it—including a thousand letters to Emily Hale—is still sequestered. But Seymour-Jones has not found anything pointing unambiguously to a homosexual relationship in Eliot's life, and we can feel confident that she has conducted a thorough search.

"She has an original mind," Eliot once wrote to a friend about Vivienne, "and I consider not at all a feminine one." Like other recent commentators on Eliot's writing, Seymour-Jones is


CRUISIN' FOR A BRUISIN'
OUR KID IS AN HONOR STUDENT.
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WE HAVE MONEY-AND LOTS OF IT!
WE NEVER GET SICK.
OUR DOG IS A NATIONAL CHAMPION.

quite right to identify a misogynistic tendency. Eliot's attitude toward women had the same source as his attitude toward Jews: the reactionary program of the Action Française (which had also attracted the interest of Jean Verdenal). The Action Française was, originally, an anti-Dreyfusard political movement; its leader, Charles Maurras, ascribed what he regarded as the decline of France to the influence of women and Jews, whom he held responsible for the corruptions of individualism, romanticism, sensuality, and irrationalism. Eliot was a serious admirer of Maurras's book "L'Avenir de l'Intelligence," which he read during his year in Paris, and, later on, of Julien Benda's tract "Belphégor," which was published in 1918, and which attributes the decay of French culture to (ahead of other undesirables) women writers and Jewish philosophers. This is why the alleged un-femininity of his wife's mind was, for Eliot, a point of pride.

In the poetry, this attitude toward the female mind is expressed as a horror of female sexuality. The poetry Eliot wrote between 1918 and 1922 is populated by oversexed female characters: Grishkin ("The sleek Brazilian jaguar / Does not in its arboreal gloom / Distil so rank a feline smell / As Grishkin in a drawing-room"); Princess Volupine (who "extends / A meagre, blue-nailed, phthisic hand / To climb the waterstair. Lights, lights, / She entertains Sir Ferdinand / Klein"); the Jewish prostitute Rachel née Rabinovitch (who "tears at the grapes with murderous paws"); the sexually negligent typist ("Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass: / 'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over' "); and the vampirish woman who "drew her long black hair out tight," in "The Waste Land." It is tempting (and Seymour-Jones, naturally, succumbs to the temptation) to derive these figures from Vivienne. But Eliot's conception of women as civilization's succubae predated his marriage.

Possibly sex is the wrong frame for understanding that marriage anyway. Tom and Vivienne had a life together, after all. They went dancing and listened to music, and they shared an interest in contemporary art and literature. Eliot thought that Vivienne had rescued him from a boring life as an American philosophy professor, which is what his family wanted for him. He realized very quickly that he had married an invalid, and for many years he was committed to her care. He nursed Vivienne, he searched out special treatments for her, and he fretted continually, and somewhat neurotically, about providing financially for her. She nursed him, too. In the end, he was overmatched: he didn't have the temperament—he was too absorbed by the fascinations of his own depression and self-loathing—to sustain the necessary devotion.

And devotion, not merely sexual satisfaction, was what Vivienne desired. Eliot's desertion shattered her, because, despite her craziness and her taunting, she worshipped him. She used to leave her front door unlocked every night between ten-thirty and eleven, in case he decided to return. Her stalking was not aggressive; it was pathetic. She imagined that her husband had been taken away by people who didn't care for him and would destroy him. She did not mean to be a harpy, and he did not mean to be a brute. Those were just the forms their unhappiness had to take.

In 1935, Vivienne managed to track her husband down at a book fair, where she had learned that he was scheduled to give a talk. She wore her Fascist uniform and carried, in her arms, three of Eliot's books and their terrier, Polly. As the audience was getting seated, she turned and saw that Eliot was right behind her, on his way to the lectern. She recorded the moment in her diary:

> I turned a face to him of such joy that noone in that great crowd could have had one moment's doubt. I just said, Oh *Tom*, & he seized my hand, & said how *do* you *do*, in quite a loud voice. He walked straight on to the platform then & gave a most remarkably *clever*, well thought out lecture. . . . I stood the whole time, holding Polly *up* high in my arms. Polly was very excited & wild. I kept my eyes on Tom's face the whole time, & I kept nodding my head at him, & making encouraging signs. He looked a *little* older, more mature & smart, much *thinner* & *not* well or robust or rumbustious at *all*. No sign of a woman's *care* about him. No cosy evenings with dogs and gramophones I should say.

After the lecture, she went onstage and stood next to him while he signed copies of his books. "I said quietly, Will you come back with me?" "I cannot talk to you now," Eliot replied. He signed the books she had brought with her, and then he left. She never saw him again. ♦

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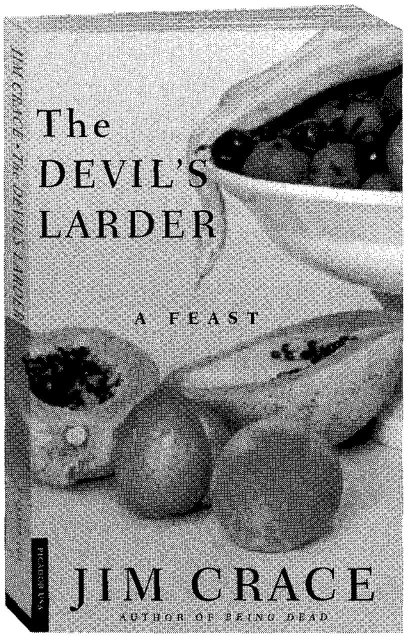

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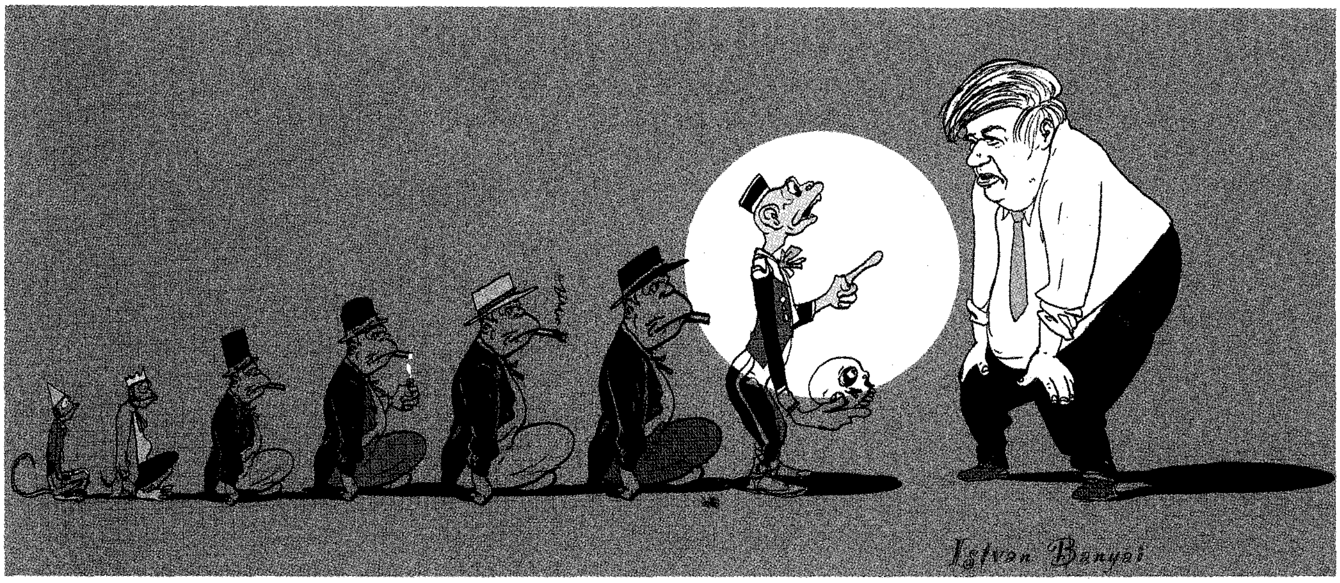
THE DESCENT OF GOULD

How a paleontologist sought to revolutionize evolution.

BY H. ALLEN ORR

In the mid-forties, on the fourth floor of the American Museum of Natural History, there stood the remains of a tyrannosaurus. Towering above hordes of awestruck kids, this pile of bones inspired two of the best-known careers in twentieth-century science—that of a writer and that of a researcher. The most impressive thing about these careers, though, was that they were both pursued by the same person: Stephen Jay Gould.



Stephen Jay Gould started as a scholar of snails but ended up mounting a serious challenge to Darwinian orthodoxy.

ISTVAN BANYAI

Gould, who died this May at sixty, always dated his conversion to paleontology to his encounter with the dinosaur at age five. If this event marked the psychological genesis of his dual careers, their public début followed three decades later, in 1977, when he published two books, one popular, "Ever Since Darwin," and the other technical, "Ontogeny and Phylogeny." Though both received good notices, it was, more than anything, their simultaneity that turned heads. Scientists do not as a rule burst upon the popular and the professional scenes at the same moment. (Far more often, as dotage approaches, a scientist will try to leverage a lifetime of scientific achievement into popular success.) The *Times,* in a rave review, made much of Gould's double début, and he was off and running.

Gould came to real fame through his writings on evolution for *Natural History*. For a quarter century, he produced three hundred monthly columns, he proudly observed, "without a single interruption for cancer, hell, high water, or the World Series." These and other pieces were bundled into ten books, among them many best-sellers. And, like Carl Sagan before him, Gould even went on to assume a place in the pop landscape, appearing everywhere from the cover of *Newsweek* to "The Simpsons." At the same time, Gould, who spent most of his career at Harvard, achieved extraordinary professional distinction. He was awarded a MacArthur "genius" prize, elected to the National Academy of Sciences, and made president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Then, with odd symmetry, Gould ended his career as he began it. With the release, this year, of "I Have Landed: The End of a Beginning in Natural History" (Harmony; $25.95), he brought his monthly essays to a planned close. And with the release, at the same time, of his magnum opus, "The Structure of Evolutionary Theory" (Belknap; $39.95), on which he toiled for some twenty years, he summarized a lifetime of thinking on evolution.

Gould was a modern master of the scientific essay, the inheritor of a tradition shaped by the likes of T. H. Huxley, J. B. S. Haldane, and Martin Gardner. True to form, the essays in "I Have Landed" delight in the unlikely intersection of science with you-name-it—the Alamo, the Red Sox, Nabokov, the mourners at Marx's funeral. In one piece, Gould brings together Darwin's reluctance to utter the word "evolution" and the reopening of the Hayden Planetarium, in 2000, to launch a marvellously lucid explanation of the difference between biological and stellar evolution. "When astronomers talk about the evolution of a star, they clearly do not invoke a . . . theory like Darwin's," he writes. "Stars do not change through time because mama and papa stars generate broods of varying daughter stars."

Yet Gould was perhaps at his best when on the attack. He warred relentlessly against what he viewed as bad science. His chief enemy was genetic determinism, the view that it's all in the genes. He battled this cant on two fronts. The first was sociobiology and its stepchild evolutionary psychology, and their often soaring speculations on the evolutionary basis of human culture. Gould charged the champions of these creeds with both a vulgar hereditarianism (they were given to saying things like "Consider a gene for gathering behavior in women"—even when no such gene has ever been found) and an addiction to untestable Just So stories ("Gathering behavior is favorable because . . ."). He went on to argue that all such "adaptationist" tales ignore the possibility that some features of animals and plants are simply by-products of how organisms are built, not the direct, designed products of natural selection. Such features, as Gould and his Harvard colleague Richard Lewontin famously put it, are like spandrels in church architecture—the triangular spaces that appear automatically between arches. Speculation about the "purpose" of these unplanned spaces is both futile and foolish. Likewise for speculation about the purpose of, say, the color of blood: as Lewontin and others have pointed out, blood looks red when it carries oxygen, but surely it's the oxygen that natural selection cares about, not the red.

The other front in Gould's war was the I.Q. industry. A large and apparently sophisticated literature claimed that I.Q. measured a single real thing called intelligence, and that this thing showed profound genetic differences across races. Over the years, these conclusions were invoked to justify a number of racist policies, including the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, which ultimately barred entry to millions of Jews attempting to flee prewar Europe. In work that culminated in "The Mismeasure of Man," Gould levelled city blocks of this literature, exposing its appalling intellectual shoddiness. His book enjoyed enormous popular success and earned him a National Book Critics Circle Award. This was terrific stuff, and it's too bad we won't have more of it.

But, as Gould himself observed, the "history of ideas emphasizes innovation and downgrades popularization." (If you don't believe it, consider the long lineup of scientists who published pop books on relativity. It's not their faces on all those posters, T-shirts, and mugs.) And Gould did do serious intellectual work. "The Structure of Evolutionary Theory" is his synthesis of these labors, decades of bold and immensely controversial theorizing about how evolution works. Gould's technical work may have been less visible to his fans, but it was as well known within science as his popular work was outside. For his ideas represent the most serious challenge to evolutionary orthodoxy in half a century. Although he concedes that Darwin got much of it right, he had little doubt that his own efforts demand a fundamental change in our view of evolution.

At nearly fifteen hundred pages and five pounds, "The Structure of Evolutionary Theory" is in every sense a weighty tome. In this respect, at least, Gould is at a distinct disadvantage to Darwin. For Darwin had the good fortune of almost being scooped by the naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, and so having to rush "On the Origin of Species" into print. Darwin always called his book an "abstract" of an intended much longer work. This may well represent Wallace's greatest contribution to science: by speeding Darwin along, he probably spared us an interminable and unreadable book. It's unfortunate that Gould had no Wallace. "The Structure" 's mammoth dimensions are due partly to its range—it surveys both the history of evolutionary thought and Gould's contributions to it—and partly to Gould's remarkably undisciplined prose. A specimen:

> The intricate and multifaceted concepts that have nuanced and altered the central logic on all three branches of Darwinism's essential postulates represent ideas of broad ramification and often remarkably subtle complexity, as we vain scientists soon discovered in our fractured bubbles of burst pride—for we had been so accustomed to imagining that an evening in an armchair could conquer any merely conceptual issue, whereas we all acknowledge the substantial time and struggle that empirical problems, demanding collection and evaluation of data, often require.

The result is that, while Gould's popular essays are perhaps the most widely read texts in the history of biology, his magnum opus risks becoming one of the least.

This is a shame, because Gould has something to say. His history of evolutionary thinking, which makes up the first half of "The Structure of Evolutionary Theory," is particularly impressive. As a rule, though, it's not for history that one turns to Gould. It's for his

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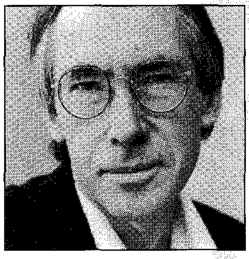

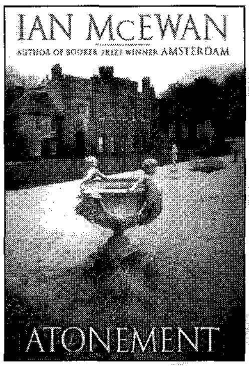
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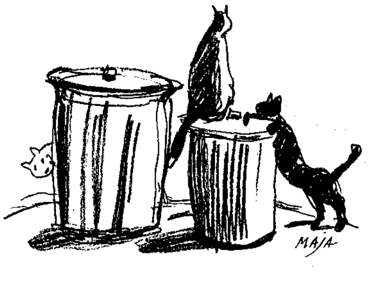
own unorthodox ideas on the theory of evolution, the topic of the book's second half. The most radical thing about these ideas is that Gould had them. For Gould was a paleontologist, and paleontologists, it had been understood, were there to dig deep holes, not to think deep thoughts. Geneticists and mathematicians sat at evolutionary high table—they alone had the right to theorize about how evolution works—and paleontologists kept to their place. For Gould, that place was the study of snails, an almost painfully unglamorous subject and as far from the rarefied glories of theory as one could get. Gould rejected this intellectual apartheid, announced that paleontology had plenty to say about the process of evolution, and began theorizing furiously.

The biggest of Gould's theories—and the one on which his scientific legacy will surely ride—is known as "punctuated equilibrium." Gould introduced punctuated equilibrium with Niles Eldredge, of the American Museum of Natural History, in 1972. Their starting point was simple: trust the fossils. The fossil record, they said, shows something surprising. Species look unchanged for vast stretches of time and then—suddenly—they morph. Certain species of African snail, for instance, look the same for millions of years and then abruptly change shell shape. The question was why. The traditional answer among evolutionary biologists was that species change gradually, by natural selection, and if the fossil record says different, so much the worse for the fossil record. This attitude isn't quite as cavalier as it sounds. Evolutionary biologists have always believed that the fossil record is abysmally bad. (Imagine trying to reconstruct Western history from two snapshots, one of Pontius Pilate and the other of Evel Knievel.) Moreover, biologists can see gradual adaptive change happening around them. (Think of antibiotic resistance.) So, the argument went, we're better off extrapolating from what we can see clearly now than trusting a fragmentary record of what allegedly happened then.

Gould and Eldredge believed otherwise. They said that the pattern of long stasis punctuated by sudden change is real. It doesn't reflect gaps in the data; it *is* the data. They also said—and here we move from the pattern to the theory side of punctuated equilibrium—that this pattern can be explained by two ideas. The first idea is that creatures are robust beings that resist the pressures of changing environments. This conservatism, they argued, reflects the complexities of development, the intricate process by which an organism goes from a single cell to a strapping adult: development is so tightly coördinated that it can't be easily tinkered with without breaking down entirely. The result is no evolutionary change. This idea of "developmental constraints" was the most heterodox aspect of punctuated equilibrium. Darwin, after all, held that animals and plants are nearly infinitely pliant, adapting to the subtlest shift in the environment; Gould and Eldredge held that organisms are stiff and unyielding.

The second idea is that sudden change in the fossil record happens at the very moment that a species splits into two species. According to conventional theory, "ordinary" evolutionary change and species-splitting have little to do with each other. If we consider two lizard populations—one on one side of a river and one on the other—traditional theory says that either population could start to change, say, tail length at any time. If we could leap forward and look at these populations a million years hence, we might find that although they began with identical tail lengths they now have tails of markedly different lengths. This wouldn't mean, however, that these lizards now belong to separate species. They would belong to separate species only if the two populations could no longer mate with each other and produce fertile offspring; only, that is, if they could no longer share genes. The genetic changes underlying this process of "speciation" are thought to accumulate slowly and gradually between geographically separated populations. But the essential point is that, under this traditional view, speciation and change in ordinary features like tail length are not necessarily simultaneous.

This is the view that Gould and El-



dredge rejected. Echoing arguments made by the naturalist Ernst Mayr, they claimed that speciation involves "genetic revolutions," episodes of extensive genetic change that shake up much of an organism's genome. Going even further, Gould and Eldredge argued that only speciation—only passage through a genetic revolution—is sufficiently violent to break the binds of developmental constraints. The result is that all evolutionary change is restricted to rare moments of species-splitting. Lizards can't just go changing tail length; they can do so only when splitting into different species. So much for Darwinism.

Punctuated equilibrium ignited enormous controversy. The scientific literature erupted into attack and counterattack; conferences melted down. Even by the indelicate standards of science, the debate got ugly. Punctuated equilibrium was branded "evolution by jerks," and Gould was, as he says, "reviled in many quarters." The ferocity of the proceedings had several causes. One was that a great deal was at stake. Punctuated equilibrium struck at the foundations of evolution, and scientists do not, as a rule, like being told that their theoretical edifice teeters on a wobbly base. Then there was the matter of Gould's style. Gould was, by his own admission, the "most arrogant of literati," and his outsized confidence seemed to provoke an escalation in his (and everyone else's) rhetoric. In 1980, he brashly pronounced the modern theory of Darwinism "effectively dead," and predicted the emergence of "a new and general theory of evolution." Last, the theory of punctuated equilibrium was at odds with the evidence, unsalvageably so. There was simply no reason to think that speciation is a tumultuous event during which evolutionary change is especially likely to take place. Worse, mountains of data contradicted the claim that organisms are bound by developmental constraints, unable to change unless they speciate. The best of this evidence is no farther away than the corn on your plate or the Chihuahua on your sofa. If man can shape these things from their wild ancestors by artificial selection—and without speciation—talk of strong constraints is in a bad way.

Gould ultimately conceded all this, though at an agonizing pace that spanned

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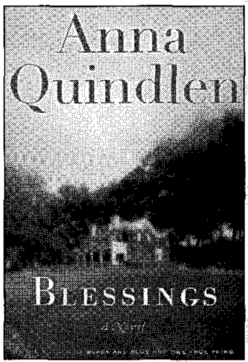

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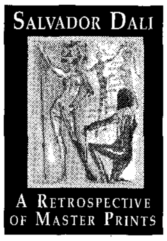

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decades. (In this respect, if in no other, he was a gradualist.) In "The Structure of Evolutionary Theory," he admits that "we made mistakes," and that prominent among these were the claims about both constraint (idea one) and speciation (idea two). The theory part of punctuated equilibrium was thereby gutted. But what of the pattern part? If a punctuated pattern characterizes the fossil record—and Gould insists that it does, and spends a good deal of "The Structure" trying to show that new species often appear abruptly in the fossil record alongside ancestral ones—what explains it?

Gould concludes that the best guess was one made by the evolutionist Douglas Futuyma in the eighties. Futuyma's idea starts with the fact that different populations of a species often adapt to local features of their environments. Mice in the north, for instance, might evolve to be bigger than those in the south because big bodies lose proportionally less heat. But such local differences are usually too short-lived to show up in the fossil record. That's because populations are apt to come back into contact with each other, and when they do they begin to mate and so swap genes. As a result, any differences among the populations tend to get blended away: close encounters between northern and southern mice yield mid-sized mice. There's only one way to prevent this washing-out: populations must not only adapt but speciate. For separate species, by definition, *can't* swap genes and so won't lose their distinctive looks by genetic blending when they come into contact. This, then, might explain why, in the fossil record, change and speciation seem to go hand in hand. It's not that change is rare and happens only when species split; it's that change is common, but only if species split do the resulting differences last long enough to have a shot at showing up as fossils.

Futuyma's idea, though, had one embarrassing blemish: it's pure Darwinism. Gould and his allies thus found themselves in a peculiar position: the red-hot revolutionaries suddenly seemed staid traditionalists. This was not, of course, lost on evolutionists, many of whom were still steaming over the Darwinism-is-dead business. By the nineties, most evolutionary biologists had simply stopped paying attention to punctuated equilibrium. At best, the theory looked like a moving target, veering now at breakneck speed toward Darwinism. At worst, its chief advocate seemed muddled, a mixture of radical rhetoric and malleable ideas. Punctuated equilibrium was down, if not out.

In "The Structure of Evolutionary Theory," Gould fights mightily to defend his position against charges of collapse. He offers two main defenses. One is to deny reports of his retreat to orthodoxy by claiming that his model was fairly traditional all along. He was, he says, just trying to change paleontology by importing a "*fully conventional*" biological theory. But this won't do. Gould's model of speciation was far from conventional. And his ideas about strong developmental constraints were clearly and defiantly non-Darwinian. Gould's attempts to take the edge off his earlier views—as when he tells us that his claim that modern Darwinism was "dead" wasn't meant to imply that it was "wrong"—represent one of the least satisfying aspects of "The Structure."

Gould's second defense is far more important. Early in the debate, he began to reassess just what was revolutionary about punctuated equilibrium. He came to think that the truly outré aspect of the theory was something called species selection. In Darwin's account, natural selection acts at the level of organisms, not at the level of species. Some organisms are better adapted to their environments than others, and so have more progeny. Imagine, for instance, two kinds of moths belonging to the same species. One is white and easily seen by bird predators; the other is brown and often mistaken by birds for a dead leaf. The result is that the brown moths typically have more offspring: brown moths have a higher "fitness" than white ones. The percentage of brown moths will, consequently, increase with each generation. This is normal "organismal selection"—it yields organisms that neatly fit their environments.

But why, Gould asked, can't we extend the selectionist logic down or up the biological ladder, and talk about competition among genes, or cells, or populations, or species? The downward extension has, in fact, been achieved: William Hamilton, Richard Dawkins, and others argued that selection typi-

THE COMPANIONS

Living close to death
is not just a case of breath after breath.
It is to realize that to fraternize
with the dark prince is possible and wise,
so that in the final weather
when together you quit the room
though tentative and weary
you will have the enormous answer
to the enormous query.

—*Josephine Jacobsen*

cally acts at the level of genes. Gould, though, was more interested in the up direction—in the idea that selection can act at the level of species. According to this theory, some species split faster or go extinct more slowly than others, and therefore become more common through time. Imagine, for example, two plant species. One, a dandelion, disperses its seeds on the wind—seeds sail away to new locations. The other, a cocklebur, disperses its seeds by hooking them onto the fur of passing animals. Now, plants that disperse by wind might be more likely to speciate than those which disperse by animals: wind-dispersed seeds might be more likely to travel long distances and so found a new population on some distant shore. Such a population—living in blissful isolation from the rest of the species—has a good chance of someday evolving into a new species. If wind dispersers speciate faster than animal dispersers, the percentage of wind-dispersed species will increase over long stretches of time. Thus if we start out with one dandelion species and one cocklebur species, the fast-speciating dandelion will give rise to more "daughter" species, which, in turn, will give rise to more "granddaughter" species, and so on. After millions of years, the earth might well be enveloped by more dandelion-like than cocklebur-like species. This is species selection. The important point is that this process has nothing to do with Darwinian competition at the level of organisms. Wind-dispersed species aren't getting more common because a wind-dispersed *organism* outcompetes an animal-dispersed organism. They're getting more common because the wind-dispersed *species* form new species faster than the animal-dispersed ones. Note also that the critical quantity here—speciation rate—is a property of whole species, not of individual organisms. You can't point to one petunia in your garden and ask if it has a higher speciation rate than another. But you can point to wind-dispersed species and ask if they have a higher speciation rate than animal-dispersed ones. Species selection thus involves a higher level of fitness than biologists are used to thinking about—one that reflects the birth and death of species, not of organisms. Gould rounds out his picture of natural selection by arguing that it acts simultaneously at many levels—on genes, on organisms, on species, and perhaps even on higher levels. What he calls "hierarchical selection" is the claim not that species selection is right and organismal selection is wrong but that both act at once.

Gould has high hopes for hierarchical selection, and it takes center stage in "The Structure of Evolutionary Theory." Hierarchical selection, he says, means that we must "reconceptualize all of evolution, and revise both our worldview and our language, accordingly." Indeed, he goes on, "we cannot fairly portray these expanded views as pure sweetness and light for orthodox Darwinism. Much that has been enormously comfortable must be sacrificed." Though the rhetoric is extreme—and it's hard to see what species selection has to do with punctuated equilibrium anyway—Gould's argument for higher-level selection *is* important. Twenty-five years ago, biologists typically believed that selection was more or less constrained

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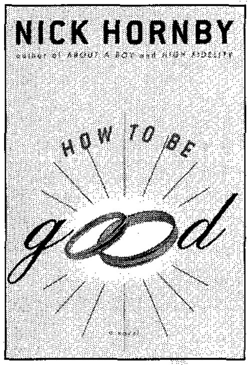
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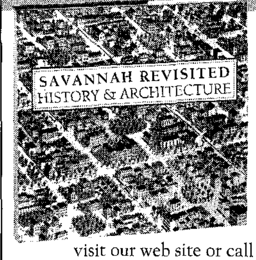

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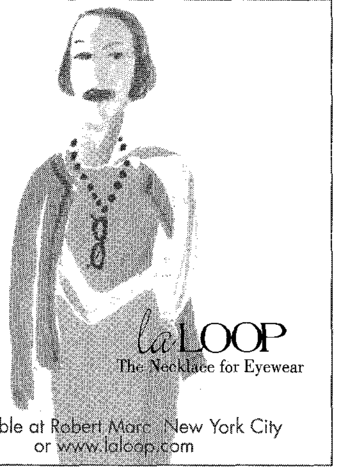

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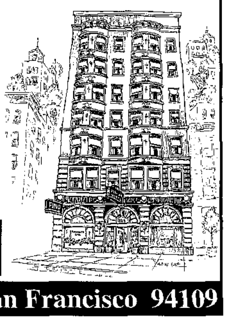

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to act on organisms or genes. This is no longer the case, and Gould deserves much of the credit for the change. His defense of species selection—at least as a formal possibility—is in places brilliant. This is Gould at his best. It is also, not coincidentally, Gould on one of the themes nearest his heart: the sheer complexity of the biological world, its stubborn refusal to submit to a simple analysis or a single equation.

But hierarchical selection is not without problems. The chief difficulty, which Gould concedes, is that it's extremely hard to distinguish species selection from other evolutionary forces when you're looking at evidence from the natural world. An increase in the percentage of dandelion-like species might be due to species selection, but it might also be due to a number of other processes, including old-fashioned organismal selection. The consequence, which Gould also acknowledges, is that there are no undisputed cases of species selection in the real world. This does not mean that the idea is wrong; I, for one, suspect that species selection acts in nature. But it does mean that Gould's species selection has a very different status than Darwin's organismal selection. Organismal selection made sudden sense of a vast number of puzzling phenomena (why, for instance, some moths look like dead leaves). Species selection remains an explanation in search of something to explain.

The worry is that all this misses what Gould was really up to. Over the years, I've come to an admittedly speculative view of Gould's modus operandi as a scientist. It starts from the idea that there were two figures looking over his shoulders as he wrote. One was Charles Darwin, but the other was Thomas Kuhn. Gould was steeped in Kuhn's 1962 book "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" and his vision of alternating bouts of workaday "normal" science and revolutionary paradigm shifts. In "The Structure of Evolutionary Theory," Gould fondly reminisces about his first reading of Kuhn as an impressionable first-year graduate student. Kuhn deeply affected Gould's science. One might even argue that punctuated equilibrium is little more than Kuhn's view of the history of ideas transferred wholesale to the history of life, an idea that is reinforced by the fact that Gould and Eldredge began their 1972 paper with talk of paradigms and Kuhn. Even the title of Gould's magnum opus seems a riff on "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions."

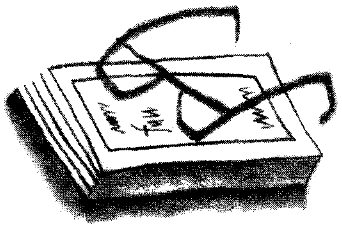
In fact, Kuhn seems to have transformed not only Gould's image of science but his image of the scientist. The revolutionary scientist, Gould seemed to conclude, is one who knows that big progress follows big jolts. Just as old and hopelessly constrained species can do nothing interesting unless they get periodically shaken, so old and hopelessly conservative paradigms can't give way to new science unless they receive a good swift kick now and then. These assaults are characterized by a great deal of noise, confusion, and hurt feelings. But, more than anything, they're characterized by a protagonist who's willing to stick his neck out farther than others dare—one who's willing to be wrong. Major progress, Gould seemed to believe, demands major risk. And, even if you get things wrong, science may ultimately gain. People ask questions and make discoveries that would otherwise have gone unasked and undiscovered. (Gould quotes the economist Vilfredo Pareto with approval here: "Give me a fruitful error any time, full of seeds, bursting with its own corrections. You can keep your sterile truth for yourself.") Gould might well then represent something new in the historical strata of science: the first self-consciously revolutionary scientist—the first scientist who set out to create a revolution at least in part because he felt that the field just *needed* one.

If something like this characterizes Gould's approach, it complicates any attempt to assess his legacy. Gould's attacks on adaptationism may have been extreme, but fanciful Just So stories are now, thankfully, rarer. Key parts of punctuated equilibrium were wrong, but paleontological data are, largely due to Gould, richer than ever. Species selection may not make sudden sense of the fossil record, but a reinvigorated paleontology sits at evolutionary biology's high table. In the end, Gould's career may force us to separate two questions that are usually conflated: was he right, and was he good for science? It may not, after all, be a law of nature that the two have the same answer. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Music of a Life, *by Andreï Makine, translated from the French by Geoffrey Strachan (Arcade; $19.95).* It is 1941, and Alexeï, a budding concert pianist, is returning to his Moscow apartment two days before his first public recital when a neighbor warns him off: his parents are being arrested. Knowing that he will be sent to the Gulag, too, Alexeï flees to the home of relatives in the countryside. Then the Germans invade, decimating his family's village but providing a plethora of bodies from which he can pillage an identity. With "the pitiless mania life has for playing at paradoxes," his decision to impersonate a dead soldier allows him to survive the war but never afterward to be himself, and the fate he was eluding finds him anyway. Makine's dreamlike prose works beautifully when combined with a strong plot, as it was in his first novel, "Dreams of My Russian Summers," and as it is here. Stalin's atrocities are made visceral in this wisp of a book.

The Lives of the Muses, *by Francine Prose (HarperCollins; $25.95).* "She is either Muse or she is nothing," Robert Graves wrote. After the Renaissance, the Greek goddesses of artistic inspiration were replaced by real—if idealized—women (think Dante and Beatrice). In these well-researched essays, Prose examines the lives of nine women who inspired some of history's most prominent artists and writers, including Samuel Johnson, Man Ray, and John Lennon. Nearly all these muse-artist relationships were distinguished by tragedy, and only five were sexually consummated; as Prose notes, "The power of longing is more durable than the thrill of possession." What emerges by the end of the book, oddly, is a case for the singularity of artistic influence: the author shows that Lewis Carroll's attachment to Alice Liddell was not at all like Nietzsche's sense of intellectual kinship with Lou Andreas-Salomé, nor was Yoko Ono's involvement with John Lennon as fruitful as Suzanne Farrell's with George Balanchine. The strongest essays here, on Liddell, Farrell, Ono, and Lee Miller (a *Vogue* model and photographer who posed for and worked with Man Ray), pointedly refute the notion that the role of the muse is a passive one, and offer in its place a complicated vision of the necessary contradictions of artistic life—including the desire for both feverish devotion and artistic independence, and a sense of the truth of beauty and the transience of it. Prose's broader conclusions about culture can seem hasty, but the book's achievement is its quiet reëvaluation of the received notion that genius is solitary in nature.



Jesse James: Last Rebel of the Civil War, *by T. J. Stiles (Knopf; $27.50).* Jesse Woodson James was America's most romanticized bandit, celebrated as a kind of avenging Robin Hood. But, in a thorough examination of his life and times, Stiles argues that James more closely resembled a young man with a merciless itch for excitement and easy money. Stiles is particularly good at re-creating murderous, anarchic Missouri society during the Civil War and Reconstruction, when James, who was born in 1847, came of age; the author's accounts of the bushwhacker raids led by the guerrilla fighters William Clarke Quantrill and "Bloody Bill" Anderson are harrowing. Through massacres, train robberies, and a futile pursuit by Pinkerton detectives, James himself remains a distant figure—an outlaw, a charmer, and, above all, perhaps, an intelligent and very modern self-promoter and fame-seeker. He is not nearly so interesting as his implacable mother, Zerelda, or his brother Frank, a reader of Shakespeare, who lived into the twentieth century, took part in Wild West shows, and deserves a biography of his own.

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BOOKS

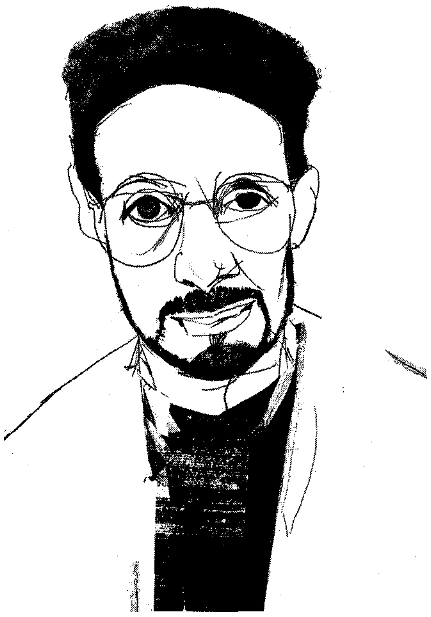
HOME CARE

A family novel from Bombay.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

Whereas Salman Rushdie's celebrated "Midnight's Children" gave us Bombay with a headlong, fantastic, word-twirling magic realism, Rohinton Mistry, a Bombay-born Canadian, presents the same diverse, congested metropolis with a realism that, if too wry to be called sober, might be termed Tolstoyan. In a polished but economical and unobtrusive prose, he writes of household dramas, of plausibly confined, earthbound lives seeking to generate on their own a spark of relieving magic. Mistry harks back to the nineteenth-century novelists, for whom every detail, every urban alley, every character however lowly added a vital piece to the full social picture, and for whom every incident illustrated the eventually crushing weight of the world. Liveliness, precision, weight: these old-fashioned mimetic virtues, and the broad sympathy that calls them into being, cannot be taken for granted during a time when the producers and consumers alike of fiction have had their sensibilities early deadened by an incessant barrage of visual entertainment as insubstantial as it is eye-catching. In a world of hurry and quick artistic killing, Mistry has kept the patience to tease narrative and moral interest out of domestic life, in a subcontinent of more than a billion striving, often desperate souls. His new novel, "Family Matters" (Knopf; $26), announces its territory in the title; its plot concerns the disruptions and changes in an extended family when its patriarch, the retired professor Nariman Vakeel, at the age of seventy-nine breaks his ankle and requires nursing care.

He has been living with his unmarried middle-aged stepchildren, Jal (male) and Coomy (female) Contractor, in a spacious apartment in a building grandly called Chateau Felicity. Unable to cope with the hygienic needs of Nariman's body, which is afflicted with Parkinson's disease and osteoporosis as well as a ponderous thigh-to-foot plaster cast, the siblings foist the old man off on the lone child of his union with their dead mother, a daughter named Roxana. She and her husband, Yezad Chenoy, have an apartment barely big enough for them and their two young sons, Murad and Jehangir, in a building designated, modestly but optimistically, Pleasant Villa. As families do, they cope, thanks to Roxana's devoted energy and strength, Yezad's grudging acceptance of the situation, and the affectionate interest of the two boys. Though every viewpoint is animated by the author's omniscience, the younger son, Jehangir, receives the most fond and knowing attention, and writes a first-person epilogue, confirming our sense that the novel's emotional center is a boy's experience of his ancient, deteriorating grandfather. Senescence recapitulates existence: Nariman's dreams rehearse the tragedy of his life, a youthful love affair frustrated by his parents, while



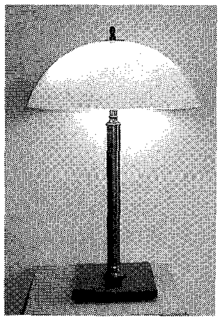
Rohinton Mistry

RICCARDO VECCHIO

his elderly presence challenges the resources of each family member. As in Mistry's more grandly scaled, Commonwealth Writers Prize-winning magnum opus, "A Fine Balance" (1995), close quarters breed difficulty, ill temper, wisdom, and love. The physical care of the elderly is not sentimentalized; their odors and excretions are vividly rendered. Indeed, I have not encountered another novel, except the Marquis de Sade's "The 120 Days of Sodom," in which excrement plays so prominent a role.

The Chenoys, the Contractors, and the Vakeels are Parsis, Zoroastrians whose religion enjoins an elaborate code of purity and purification. Yezad, though not at this point a believer, forbids his sons to touch their grandfather's bedpan and urine bottle, or to help the old man's eliminations in any way; this contaminating duty falls entirely on Roxana, who lifts her father's body at her strength's far reach. The doctrine of Parsi purity, fiercely expounded by Nariman's father, had doomed Nariman's long romance with Lucy, a Goan Catholic. Coincidentally, Mistry writes about Parsis, a minority of less than a hundred thousand in India, and the novel out of India that has most recently met with success in the West, Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things" (1997), dealt with another dwindling Indian sect, Syrian Christians. The Parsis, the remnant of a migration from Persia around a thousand years ago, developed a flair for commerce under the British, and played a key part in the expansion and prosperity of Bombay under the East India company. Need it surprise us if Anglophone Indian novelists tend to come from Westernized minorities, and if they tend to emigrate? Roy has stayed in New Delhi, a vociferous critic of the government and the West, but Mistry and Rushdie, a Bombay Muslim, live in North America, the latter in New York City and the former near Toronto. In this novel, Yezad's dreams of getting to Canada—"the land of milk and honey, also the land of deodorant and toiletry . . . of prosperity, house, car, CD player, computer, clean air, snow, lakes, mountains, abundance"—are wrecked, in a tragicomic scene, by a slovenly, churlish, condescending immigration officer, a Japanese-Canadian called Mazobashi, who flunks Yezad in a rapid-fire quiz on ice hockey. The melting pot holds many lumps. A sad and ominous irony of "Family Matters" is that Yezad, denied emigration and his just deserts as the manager of Bombay Sporting Goods, soothes his defeats in a reëmbrace of Zoroastrianism that leaves him as tyrannically intolerant as his father-in-law's late father.

Family novels, accreted of small, walled-in events and mostly subdued emotions, work at the pace of entire lifetimes. As one sinks into them, their pulse becomes one's own. "Family Matters" has a nervous pulse; its Tolstoyan qualities, its ease and affection, are vitiated by a modernist jumpiness. Mistry writes in short paragraphs, and dashes from one viewpoint to another. The characters between Nariman and Jehangir in age could be fuller. Some, like Edul Munshi, the Contractors' downstairs neighbor in Chateau Felicity, are egregiously "flat," to use E. M. Forster's term. Munshi is built, albeit drolly, around one quality, a passion for home repair, which he performs ineptly. He is Chekhov's gun on the wall, destined to go off at the right moment. The Chenoys' Pleasant Villa neighbors, contrariwise, bring a nice excess of charm and suggestiveness to their functions in the plot: the concert violinist Daisy Ichhaporia, on the ground floor, lifts those who overhear her into a realm of impersonal beauty above family matters, and Villie Cardmaster, the nosy spinster next door to the Chenoys, entangles Yezad in playing Matka, Bombay's illegal lottery. She selects numbers through her dreams, which, as she gleefully describes them to Yezad, express erotic designs on him; though her yearnings fall on barren ground, her numbers, in the novelist's genial dispensations, do win. Yezad, even when not seen through the eyes of a son, has a bit of paternal aloofness. Understandable in his distaste for subway crowds and body odors, he baffles us with the force of his religious rebirth. Its understated key, presumably, is the guilty secret shared only with the reader: he has been party to the downfall of Bombay Sporting Goods' Pickwickian proprietor, the antic, impulsive, fatherly Vik-



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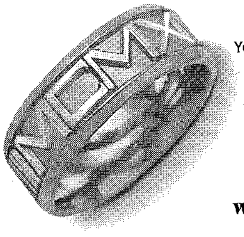

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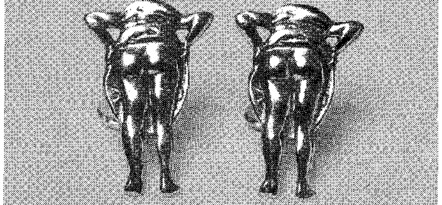

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ram Kapur. Mistry, though he has descriptive gifts, is sparing with them; Kapur's avaricious wife, for instance, is given no face or physical particulars at all, just a cool, brisk voice.

The novel, as it roams over many aspects of Indian life, portraying a land wherein privacy and honesty are subject to constant erosion, strikes a warm spot in the topic of the written word. Yezad's best friend, Vilas Rane, sells books at the Book Mart, a near neighbor of the sports shop, and as a sideline reads and writes letters for the illiterate. For his customers, watching him pen their dictation is "like the hungry on a feast to which they had no hope of being invited." For the letters' recipients, a new reality opens up. "It is like being with you in the city, sharing your life," comes the response through a village scribe. "We hear your voice in every line, so wonderful is the effect of the words." For the scribe, too, the effect approaches the miraculous:

> And Vilas, writing and reading the ongoing drama of family matters, the endless tragedy and comedy, realized that collectively, the letters formed a pattern only he was privileged to see. . . . If it were possible to read letters for all of humanity, compose an infinity of responses on their behalf, he would have a God's-eye view of the world, and be able to understand it.

Some such God's-eye view, of the world mapped in words, is an ambition possible, perhaps, only where literacy is still an adventure. Yezad is a novelist manqué. As he labors over his plea for admission to Canada, he tells himself, "Words had power to sway, words had accomplished mighty things, they had won wars. Surely the language of Churchill and Shakespeare and Milton, ignited with a careful mix of reason and passion, could win him a mere immigration visa." Inventing lies for Mr. Kapur, he discovers the art of fiction: "The deeper he went into the story, the more his characters acquired the solidity of flesh and blood. He recognized their potential instinctively, letting them grow was easy." And Jehangir, who hears his grandfather utter protests while dreaming, resolves to eventually assemble the puzzle of family mysteries: "He turned the phrases over in his mind, storing them away with the other fragments he was saving. Some day, it would all fit together, and he would make sense of Grandpa's words." Such sense is the substance of the book we hold in our hands.

Jehangir's epilogue brings the action into the twenty-first century. Murad is turning eighteen, with a non-Parsi girlfriend, and Jehangir is fourteen, with his own sexual adventures beginning; their ages place the novel's main action in the mid-nineteen-nineties. Nariman moves back into his apartment, sharing it now with Roxana and her family and Jal. Domestic life is not always nonviolent; five violent deaths have thinned the novel's cast of characters. The old man misses the crowded quarters at Pleasant Villa; his grandson writes, "I think it was very lonely for him to have his own room again." After a year of being cared for by hired attendants, Grandpa dies. His ceremonious dying—Daisy plays for him in full concert dress—is described, and then Murad's birthday, whose celebration temporarily overwhelms the father-son conflicts. Rebellious Murad is embraced, prayed over, and allowed at last to wind the family clock. The reader is moved, even to tears, by these rites of passage among characters we have lived with long enough to feel as family. Against the suspicion that the tears are too easily earned, it could be argued that family matters penetrate to our deepest level; they are the mill that grinds our flour, the lathe that gives us our shape. They are irresistibly momentous. Segmented by castes, creeds, and languages, beset by corruption and poverty, India has not, unlike some of its Asian neighbors, weakened the family in a revolutionary drive to improve mankind's lot. This lot, at bottom, may remain tragic; Nariman reflects at one point, "In the end all human beings become candidates for compassion, all of us, without exception." The exercise of compassion, by the writer and then by the reader, remains one of the novel's chief duties and complex pleasures. ♦

From the Albuquerque (N.M.) Journal.

Two critics of a portrait of Our Lady of Guadalupe, clad only in garlands of flowers and hanging at a state museum, asked the state museum Board of Regents on Friday to take the work down.

The Board of Regents complied immediately.

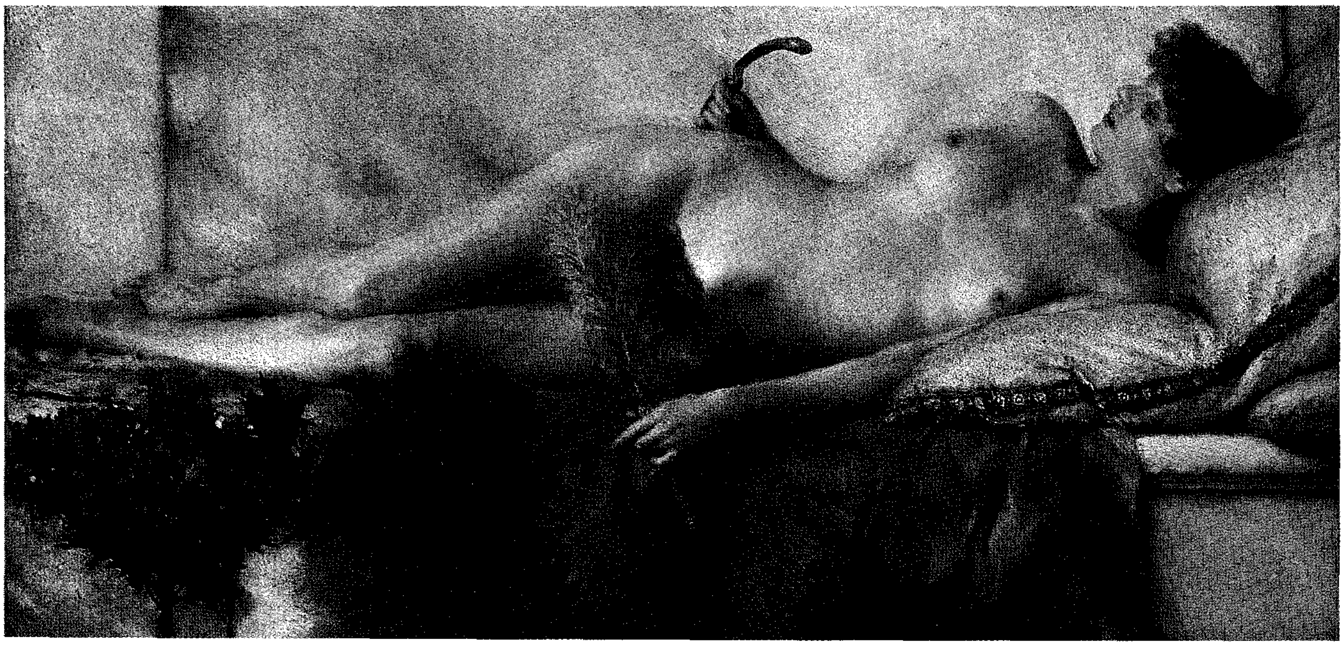
THE ART WORLD

NOTHING ON

Sex and the Victorians.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

The Victorians were obsessed with sex. That's our new conventional wisdom about an age of proverbial prudery. It informs a strong, mildly racy historical show, "Exposed: The Victorian Nude," that opened at Tate Britain, in London, last year and is now at the Brooklyn Museum, where it will run until January 5th. The zeal with which Victorians kept up chaste appearances is a giveaway, according to a type of analysis pursued by Michel Foucault, among others. When you presume to constrict, divert, disguise, and otherwise finesse a primal drive, you give it the run of your imagination. One of the show's curators, Martin Myrone, notes in the sumptuous catalogue that the word "pornography" entered the English language during Victoria's reign. The show explores attempts to exploit nudity for maximum appeal but minimum outright eroticism, from the Rubenesque fantasist William Etty, circa 1830, to the harsh realist Walter Sickert, eighty years later. With an air of spilling the beans, Myrone and his fellow-curators, Alison Smith and Robert Upstone, supplement the art with naughty photography, and films, made as early as 1896, which offer such delights as a Victorian lady doing a striptease. (Given her profusion of garments, it might be termed a striptoil.) Not for the first time, we are invited to chuckle at Victorian hypocrisy. But wait.



Alma-Tadema's raffishly genteel "Tepidarium" epitomizes an age obsessed with negotiating sexual taboos.

"TEPIDARIUM" (DETAIL), LADY LEVER ART GALLERY, UK/BRIDGEMAN

Condescension begs the question of why we should be interested now—as I think we are—in Victoriana, which for most of the twentieth century was an emblem of stuffiness. I suspect that it's because our own supposedly liberated age is itself marked by militant conventionality and bossy moralism. Take a lately enshrined oxymoron, "sexual identity." The phrase conveys a giddy confidence that the magma of sex can be managed with *bien-pensant* cookie cutters. Here we go again. Certainly, there is something eerily akin to a lot of tedious contemporary art in "The Victorian Nude"—a compulsion to attitudinize, and to subordinate aesthetic experience to warranties of morally correct or otherwise laudable intent. Now, as then, socially imposed self-consciousness trivializes pleasures of talent and skill.

Consider the gratuitous gorgeousness of paintings by the Victorian Lawrence Alma-Tadema and of art films by today's Matthew Barney. Erotica doesn't get tonier than in Alma-Tadema's "Tepidarium" (1882), a luminous small painting of an enervated Roman lass wielding a phallic strigil (a skin-scraper) and a strategically positioned feathered fan while recumbent on pillows and fur. (The work's genteel raffishness is so well judged that the Pears Soap company bought it.) Barney's swanky, gamy, unaffecting allegories strike me as Victorian in a similarly glamorous, strenuously coy way. I hasten to add that Barney is one of the most accomplished artists we've got.

When sex is filtered through ideals, individual sex lives are prone to surprises. An ur-Victorian legend concerns the trauma suffered by John Ruskin on his wedding night, when he first caught sight of his bride's pubic hair. For all Ruskin, or anyone else, could have known from looking at nineteenth-century British painting and sculpture—which, in this respect, took classical precedents as unalterable law—the mature female pudendum was baby-bottom smooth. As presented in Victorian art, the nude female is a hermetic vessel. For what? For stories and morals. The viewer's gaze,

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frustrated in its sexual interest, dilates to take in the expression of the figure as a whole. We are diverted from what we're looking at—a naked woman—to what we're supposed to be looking at. In one painting, it's Venus. In another, Lady Godiva, a Nubian slave, or a fairy. Diana, Circe, Titania, Hypatia, Lilith, Galatea, Pandora, Psyche, Andromeda, and St. Eulalia (her martyred corpse) each takes a turn as the heroine of an edifying tale. Images of men, who are sometimes allowed to have genitals (again with classical endorsement), may shade toward the erotic with an androgynous Cupid, Narcissus, or Endymion, but mostly they project tip-top physical fitness. Icarus, Oedipus, Teucer, Perseus, and no end of generic athletes incarnate myths of the virile action hero. (It's helpful to think of Victorian art, in tandem with Victorian popular literature, as a preview of the not yet invented movies.)

Several alarming images of children in the show—notably, a stupefying hand-colored photograph by Lewis Carroll of a young girl posed as a Titian Venus—point to a dark side of Victorian fantasy. But dark for whom? The evil of child abuse gives firm authority to moralistic trends in society today. But I wonder if we should complacently judge the Victorian way of negotiating taboos by camouflaging forbidden acts in fancy dress. Carroll conducted his photo sessions with punctilious safeguards against impropriety. Lacking evidence of abusive behavior on Carroll's part, we may deem him an odd kind of moral hero, quite apart from the literary glories that his obsession yielded. In any event, we can expect no new "Alice in Wonderland" from the epoch of Megan's Law, and this is probably just as well. My point is that being creeped out by Victorian images of children gives us a mirror experience of how Victorians, back from the grave, might react to an episode of "Sex and the City."

Like the general run of contemporary installations and videos, Victorian art was fundamentally literary. "The Victorian Nude" explores aesthetic debates that consumed British artists during the nineteenth century, involving passionate espousals of Greek and Renaissance ideals and cautious responses to their less inhibited and more inventive counterparts in France. The advent of French realism barely registered in England, where storytelling ruled. Regularly inspired by Titian and Veronese, most Victorian painting is intensely colorful. This is easy to forget, because the obtrusive subject matter turns the lush pictures to sepia illustrations in one's head. At the Brooklyn Museum, one amazing painting gives color a central role. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Venus Verticordia" (1864-68) shows a bare-breasted dominatrix-type redhead embowered in roses and honeysuckle and holding an apple and an arrow. The work demonstrates just how radical the Pre-Raphaelites were in their time; unlike the French Impressionists, who expunged all literary fussiness, Rossetti and his circle tuned it up to an unearthly shriek.

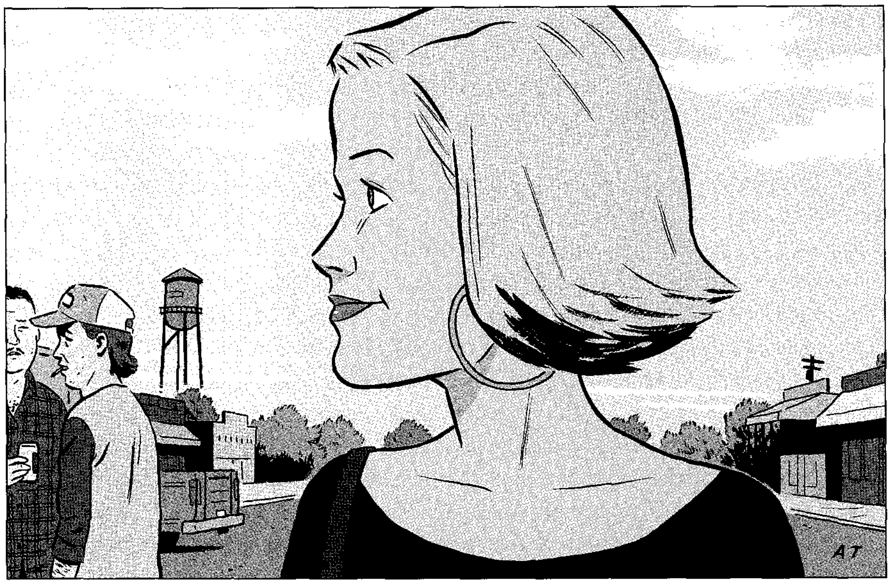
"The Victorian Nude" ends with another happy shock, in the form of a great painting from 1900, felicitously titled "The English Nude," by the too little known William Orpen. An Irishman in London, who became a virtuoso society portraitist in the mode of John Singer Sargent and a painter of sombre scenes from the First World War, Orpen was twenty-one when he made this Rembrandt-like tour de force, which depicts a young woman with long, unkempt hair, seated on a canopied, rumpled bed. She is seen from the side in glowing chiaroscuro—one leg on the bed, the other reaching to the floor. She directs a sidelong, dispassionate gaze at the viewer. Plainly, sex has occurred, but that isn't the subject. She is. According to the catalogue, the sitter was Orpen's "first true love," Emily Scobel, who, disappointed in her dreams of becoming an architect, made her living as a model. She is utterly alive. Her large nose and large feet, pouchy stomach, and air of intelligent self-possession inflect an idiosyncratic beauty. Encountering the picture, I felt I had been sprung from an interminable juvenile funfair into a world of grownups. Art history isn't at issue here. Orpen's style is archaic, compared with the forward-looking semi-abstraction of Sickert, who was a contemporary. What hit me was the sense that an honest bargain had been struck between aesthetic artifice and real life, such as the Victorians could not countenance and we, in our frantically posturing art, have lost. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

FOREIGN PARTS

"Sweet Home Alabama," "The Four Feathers."

BY ANTHONY LANE



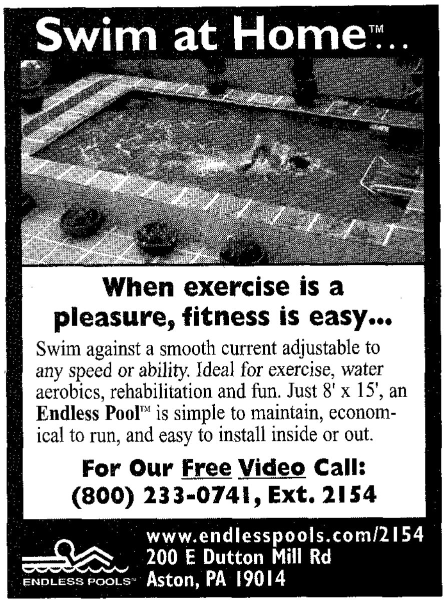
Reese Witherspoon plays a designer with a guy problem and a background problem.

ADRIAN TOMINE

Among the many talents of Reese Witherspoon is the ability to hang around in movies that are unworthy of her, and thus to shine all the brighter. Only twice, as far as I can see, has she broken this rule: once in "Twilight," which doesn't count, because she was a kid with a topless scene and a minor role, and again in "Election," which was so much smarter than most of what we watch, so much more ratty in its know-how, that you can just imagine Witherspoon sitting down with her agent and inking in the plan to lure critical opinion into her camp. Then came "Legally Blonde," a wad of cotton candy that was spun around nothing but her, and that, without her wit, at once daffy and incisive, would have blown away in the wind. After that, she marched into this year's Oscars with her husband, Ryan Phillippe, whom she could have tucked under her arm and fed with chocolate drops; she wore the expression of a woman who knew that she had the love of the general public tucked into her garter. The question was: What next?

And the answer is: "Sweet Home Alabama," in which Witherspoon plays Melanie Carmichael, a ripening fashion designer. We are asked to believe that Melanie's newest line is the toast of New York, a judgment slightly compromised by the clothes that she herself wears in the course of the movie. Deserving of special mention is the billowing Hershey-brown dress with puffball sleeves which, when not sliding off the shoulder, is complemented by what appears to be a cat blanket in old-lady blue, slung daringly around the neck. The whole ensemble is calculated to make Melanie look both pregnant and close to death, a combination that even hardened style-spies will chalk up as a first.

Melanie has a guy problem and a background problem, although the two are basically riffs on the same tune. The guy problem starts with Andrew (Patrick Dempsey), who wants to make her his bride. Three things stand in the path of bliss. First, Andrew's mother (Candice Bergen) is the mayor of New York, and has a patch of black ice where her heart is supposed to be. Second, Melanie is still officially married to Jake (Josh Lucas), the love of her former life down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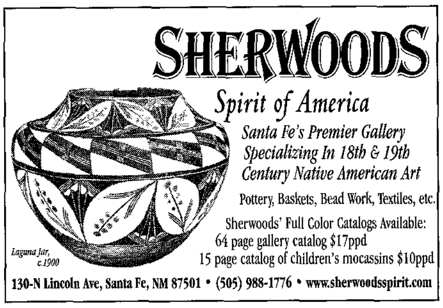
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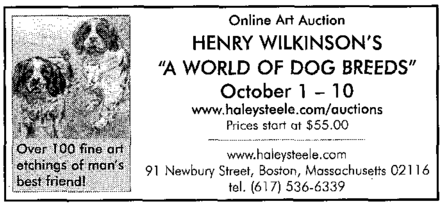
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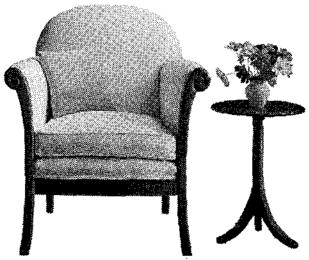

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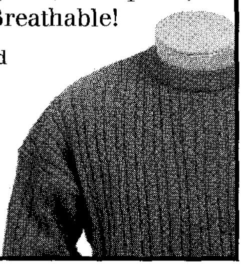

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in Pigeon Creek, Alabama, who is now covered in facial hair and engine oil. Third (and the movie will not admit to this), Andrew's untiring sensitivity at every turn, not to mention the fact that his idea of a proposal is to rent out the ring department of Tiffany's after hours, will tell any half-observant audience that he is changelessly gay. No wonder Melanie is drawn back to Jake, with his fridge full of beer and a baying bloodhound on the porch. Mind you, even he turns out to be running a fancy glassware business on the side. What is going *on* in this picture?

If "Sweet Home Alabama" was intended as easy viewing, it falls short. Some of the lighting, particularly when the object is to mimic the sunshine of the South, may actually cause temporary damage to the retina, and the whole project treads a delicate line between something that will fill a gulf in your afternoon and something that your local sanitation department will refuse to cart away. The director, Andy Tennant, wants viewers to laugh down their noses at Alabama mores (bring on the deep-fried gags), yet he also wishes to make it perfectly clear that he holds the Yankee gods of money and modishness in righteous contempt.

It is no coincidence that Witherspoon, still pumped from "Legally Blonde," has chosen to play yet another fish out of water. She is following the dictates of her own face: it may boast the roundness of the ingénue, but she could lock chins with any of the Douglas clan, and, as with earlier sweet-and-sour experts like Mary Astor and Irene Dunne, her eyes tend to narrow with the speed of a more ruthless creature. (Sometimes, at moments of comic helplessness, they flicker sideways, mock-desperate for aid she doesn't really need, mostly from men who are ill-equipped to provide it. Catch reruns of "Bewitched" and you will find Elizabeth Montgomery pulling the same stunt.) All in all, "Sweet Home Alabama" makes a suitable staging post in Witherspoon's headlong career. She may want to forget it by Christmas, yet its cushioned slackness allows her to sharpen her grasp of a steely American type: the girl next door who will kill to get out of town.

"The Four Feathers" has already been filmed four times, so why choose this moment to remount and lead a fresh assault upon the story? The movie, set in the late Victorian Age, is about a group of young British officers who go to fight for Queen and country in the Sudan. When their commanding officer tells them—to wild cheers—of their mission, he cites as the casus belli the actions of "Muhammadan fanatics," at which point a frisson is presumably meant to run through the theatre. The hook is that one of the friends, Harry Feversham (Heath Ledger), is left behind—not by accident, but because the fellow is, to put it bluntly, chicken. You could say that he wants to stay put for the sake of his fiancée, Ethne (Kate Hudson), but, as he confesses, love has nothing to do with it; he is just too yellow to face the foe. So his chums send him white feathers—the mark of a coward—whereupon, for no discernible reason, he pursues them, dresses as an Arab, performs insane acts of courage, and brings most of them home in time for tea. In short, a good effort.

The film, directed by Shekhar Kapur, labors hard to balance the books, matching bravery against the follies of imperial rule. ("You English walk too proudly on the earth," Harry is told.) If you rent the 1939 adaptation of A. E. W. Mason's novel, however, expecting to hear the solid creak of the reactionary, you will already find plenty of pointed comedy at the expense of regimental bores, and the characters are spurred into the fray with a directness that has been all but abandoned in the sluggish, meandering narrative of today. Also, Harry's best friend, Jack, who refuses to send him a feather, was played back then by Ralph Richardson, whereas this time the part goes to Wes Bentley. The comparison, I regret to inform you, is not a happy one. Bentley, who was the gazing geek with the video camera in "American Beauty," has mastered the bayonet charge and

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the brutishness of rugby, but the mysteries of an English accent reduce him to abject terror. He spends most of the movie looking as if a host of Muhammadan fanatics were invading not the outposts of colonial power but the innermost domains of his own trousers, and his reverence for the name of Harry Feversham would be easier to share if he didn't insist on pronouncing it "Hairy."

The miscasting is almost impressive in its range. Kate Hudson, never less than lovely, has a wholly modern air that no layers of costume can stifle, while Heath Ledger, being an Australian, has all the virtues, such as openness and unstarched humor, that people, then as now, left England in order to acquire. You could argue that this makes him perfect for the hero, the rebel soul, except that he doesn't look rebellious; he just looks miserable. If Harry spent half as long fighting the heathen as he does fighting back tears, the Empire would have lasted to this day. Kapur, in his desire to downsize the stiff upper lip, has invested too heavily in the trembling variety, and the result is both illogical and glum.

There are two actors who get things right. One is Alex Jennings, who is currently playing Henry Higgins in "My Fair Lady" on the London stage, and who knows that the secrets of period drama, as of military drill, reside in endless adjustments. Here, his Colonel Hamilton is not so much a standout performance as a triumph of situp; watch his iron-backed posture as he rides a horse and listen to the nonchalant way in which, not barking but speaking, he says "Fire" to the line of infantry, like someone asking for a light. Then, there is Djimon Hounsou, who plays a tribesman befriended by Harry in the desert. This seems to be an uncanny replay of Hounsou's role in "Gladiator," right down to the final overhead shot of the inextinguishable black figure walking slowly away. By then, "The Four Feathers" has all but collapsed; there are stretches in the second half of the movie when coherence becomes a distant dream. One example: how do our chaps, half of them badly wounded, make it back from the godforsaken middle of nowhere to rainy old England in a single cut? Hot-air balloon? Helicopter? E-mail? We may never know. ♦

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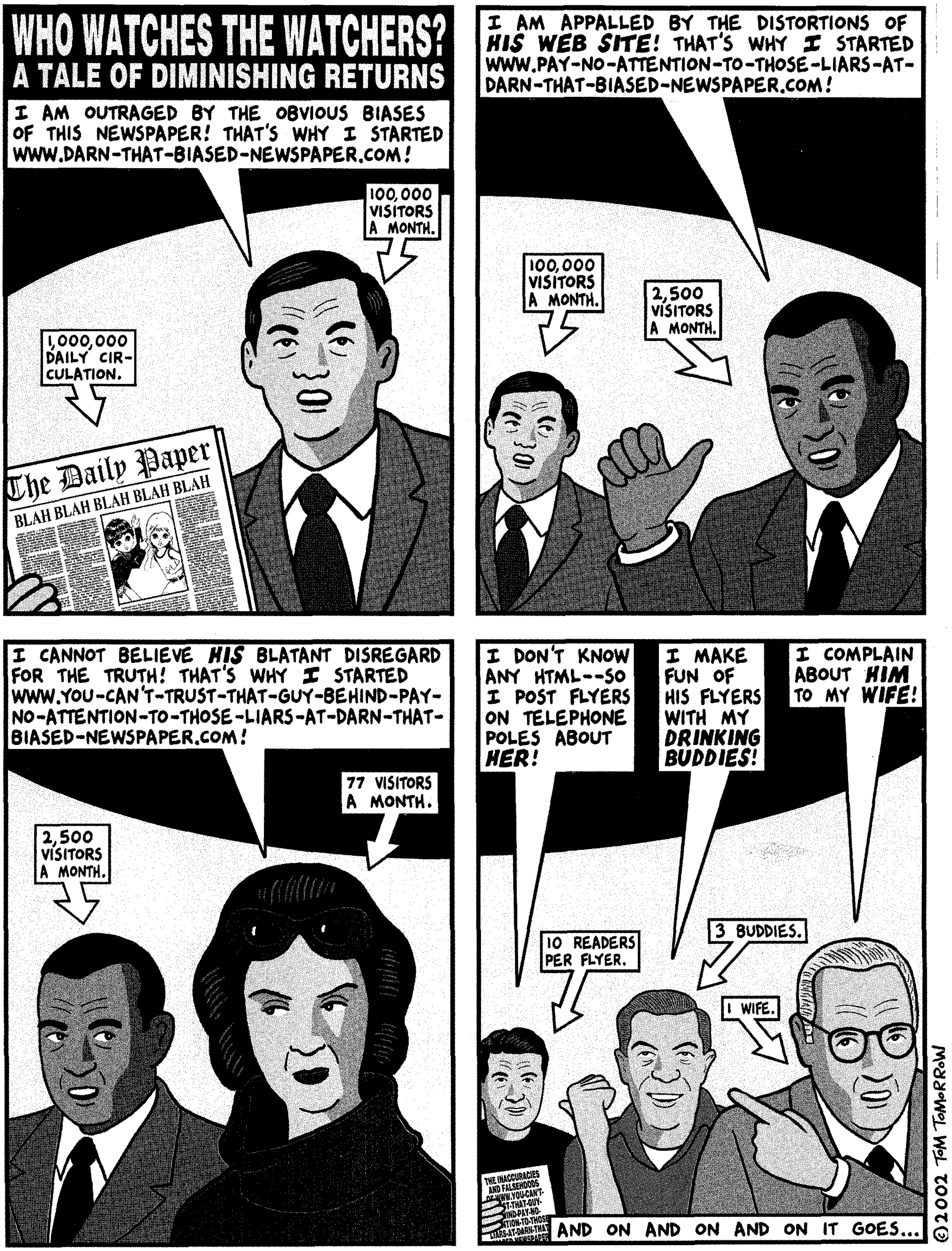
WHO WATCHES THE WATCHERS?
A TALE OF DIMINISHING RETURNS
I AM OUTRAGED BY THE OBVIOUS BIASES OF THIS NEWSPAPER! THAT'S WHY I STARTED WWW.DARN-THAT-BIASED-NEWSPAPER.COM!
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100,000 VISITORS A MONTH.
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I CANNOT BELIEVE HIS BLATANT DISREGARD FOR THE TRUTH! THAT'S WHY I STARTED WWW.YOU-CAN'T-TRUST-THAT-GUY-BEHIND-PAY-NO-ATTENTION-TO-THOSE-LIARS-AT-DARN-THAT-BIASED-NEWSPAPER.COM!
77 VISITORS A MONTH.
2,500 VISITORS A MONTH.
I DON'T KNOW ANY HTML--SO I POST FLYERS ON TELEPHONE POLES ABOUT HER!
I MAKE FUN OF HIS FLYERS WITH MY DRINKING BUDDIES!
I COMPLAIN ABOUT HIM TO MY WIFE!
10 READERS PER FLYER.
3 BUDDIES.
1 WIFE.
THE INACCURACIES AND FALSEHOODS OF WWW.YOU-CAN'T-
T-THAT-GUY-
IND-PAY-NO-
NTION-TO-THOSE
LIARS-AT-DARN-THAT
NEWSPAPER
AND ON AND ON AND ON IT GOES...
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AMERICAN DETERMINATION

Much has changed recently. Yet, from our vantage point, so much more has not. The same principles and beliefs that have long guided our company have not moved. Not even budged.

It's simple. As investment managers, we're optimistic about the future. How can we look at all of the people who surround us each day– and their achievements –and not be confident?

So, while we are completely aware of, and ever vigilant to, the forces currently at work in the marketplace, we are determined to remain true to the way we work. And think. And believe.

We know, from our experience, the market has rewarded a long-term, diligent approach.

So, for more than four decades, we've adhered to time-tested investment processes on all of the funds we manage. These practices will remain unchanged, regardless of market conditions.

We will continue to seek the most promising companies, and hand-select them one by one.

We will continue to subject these companies to our disciplined, but independent, judgment.

We will continue to adhere to our investment philosophy, constantly applying all we've learned.

And, by working together, we will continue to believe that our determination, our hard work and our confidence can ultimately lead us to an even more promising future.

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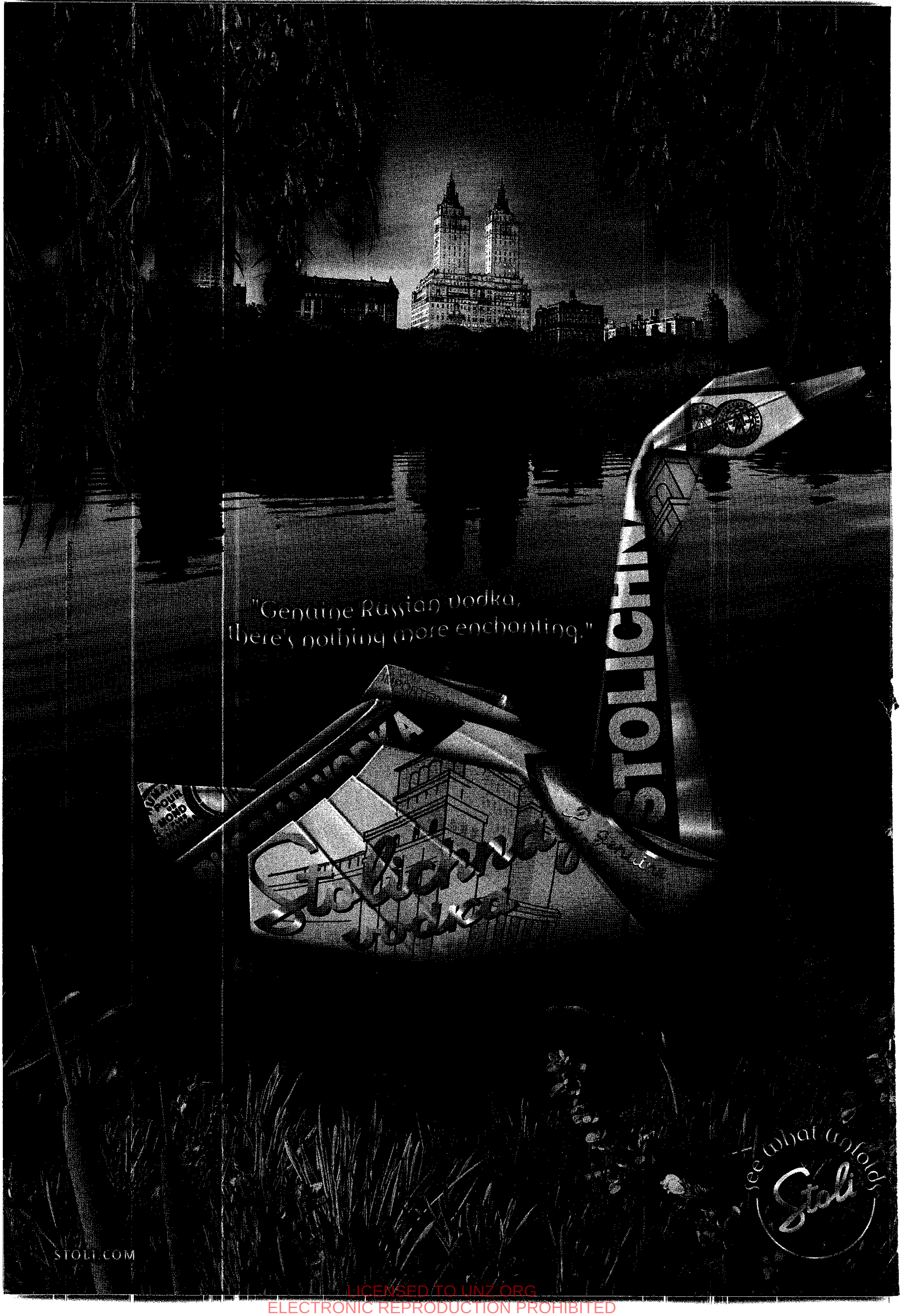
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